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THE MAN WITH THE BOOK

BY

ANNA ROSS

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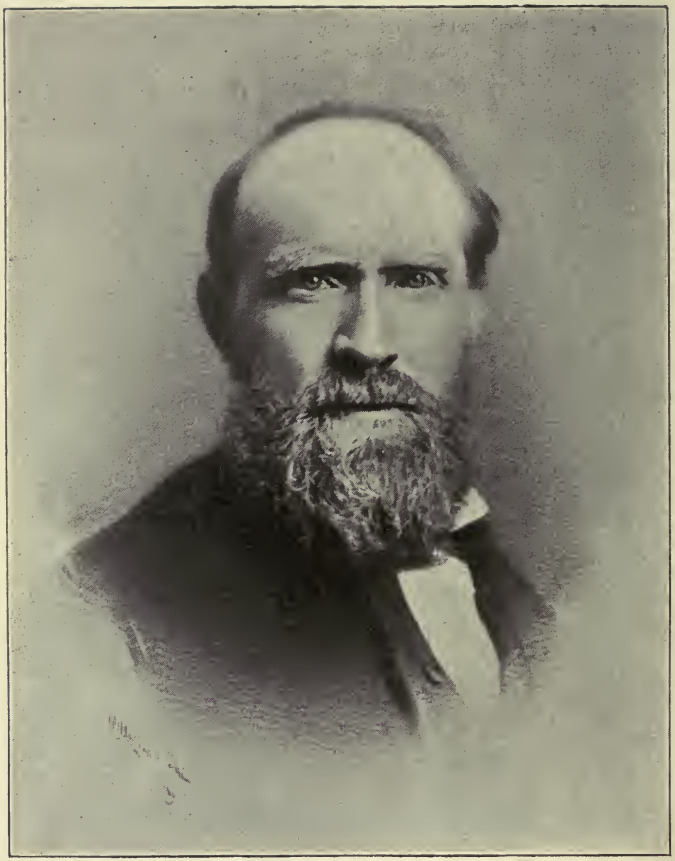
"To Aunt Betsy

with love, your

Xmas 1898. Neabe."



My dear Brother
Yours truly
G. W. Reed

THE

MAN WITH THE BOOK

OR

MEMOIRS OF

"JOHN ROSS OF BRUCEFIELD."

BY ANNA ROSS.

C194 331
16.2.25

"Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."
"All flesh is grass: * * * the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever."

TORONTO, ONT.
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1897.

PREFACE.

This little book is not a biography. It is only an attempt to preserve a memory that is blessed, and to extend an influence that has been for good. It has been executed in the midst of uncommon difficulties. The fact that it has been brought to completion confirms the hope with which it was started, that "The Lord hath need of it." This I know, that to those who want to find faults it will not be difficult to discover them; but of this, too, I am fully persuaded, that those who want the inspiration of contact with one to whom God was a reality and prayer a power, and the Word of God the living link between earth and Heaven, can scarcely go through this volume without finding touches here and there that will make them glad. There are two causes for regret—that so many precious things have been lost because no one has gathered them, and that those here given have largely had to reach the page through the unaided memory, and the necessarily imperfect wording of another. This must be remembered in reading, particularly if anything written should seem to have a sting as well as an edge. With the chapters touching the Headship of Jesus Christ and His Second

Coming, peculiar pains have been taken to give Mr. Ross's views as he held them, and, as far as possible, as he expressed them. Most of the statements are given, not merely from a general recollection of his views, but from special recollections of actual conversations. Where this was the case, much of his own wording has, I am satisfied, been consciously and unconsciously reproduced, as some who knew him best will readily recognize. Though these chapters may occasion the most fault finding, they will, I am persuaded, be the most prized, as containing truths not often met with and sorely needed. If, in any measure, this little book is "meet for the Master's use," it shall, in that measure, prove a power for good; if not, it might better never have been written. "Commit thy works to the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established."

ANNA ROSS.

Clinton, Ont., April 15th, 1897.

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INTRODUCTION.

IT was a keen Canadian winter morning. A tall man in a racoon-skin coat and a rounded beaver cap, stood ready, valise in hand, to board the train even now slackening toward the station, the moment it came to a stand.

While the wheels were still turning, a short, slight, elderly gentleman, with the white hair and withered face of age, but the active movements of a boy of thirteen, opened the car-door, and, before the would-be traveller had time to set his foot upon the step, sprang lightly to the platform. There was an instant greeting, in which the cordial hand-shake was prolonged while a few sentences of rapid explanation were interchanged. The elder gentleman had intended to pay a brotherly visit, and now there could be only a few seconds between them, for trains have always made it a point of honor to spend no unnecessary time at Brucefield.

A business-like "All aboard!" The train moved, and the conductor was in the act of springing on—

"Who-o-a!" rang out in a stentorian voice of authority.

The signal was instantly given for delay, but the conductor, angry with himself for paying any heed to such a word, faced the tall traveller with the question—

"Do you think my train is a team of horses that it should stop for you like that?"

A parting word to the disappointed friend, a gently spoken word to the annoyed conductor, and the tall traveller, with an appreciative, comical look in his blue eyes, mounted the steps and entered. He placed his valise in the first empty seat, and deliberately took up his position beside it. The thoughtful eyes, out of which

the comical look had entirely passed away, made a survey of the various fellow-passengers, but did not linger in inspection. Almost immediately a well-worn Bible bound in soft black leather was drawn from his pocket, and hand and eyes were soon busy with its contents.

A mother and child at the extreme end of the car, soon began to attract general attention. The child, a boy between three and four years of age, was evidently accustomed to rule his mother. He issued orders so peremptorily, and resented delay in obedience so vociferously that the mother was sorely put to the blush, and the rest of the passengers were both amused and annoyed. My little lord, waxing more and more unreasonable, announced his determination to open the car-door and stand out on the platform, for he "wanted to see the man turn the wheels round." The mother, full of fears for her darling, forbade, but in vain. Then she pleaded, but still in vain. The young potentate had made up his mind, and began twisting at the door-handle, loudly demanding of his mother to help him, for his little hand was not strong enough to turn it.

At this moment the tall man rose from his seat. He fixed his eye upon the spoiled child, and moved slowly towards him, pouring out at the same time a continuous stream of unintelligible denunciation, getting wilder and louder until he was only a few feet from the young hero. The child stood spellbound, with the door knob still in his hand; but the color left his cheek, and his eyes grew large with surprise and terror. The stream of denunciation stayed. The tall man stood and gazed on the child in perfect silence for about thirty seconds, then turned leisurely round, and with a perfectly grave face, but fun shining out of his eyes, went back to his seat, while the car resounded with laughter and applause, and the horrified child took refuge in its mother's arms, not to be heard any more during the journey.

But the leather-bound Bible quickly engrosses his attention again. He who "giveth to every man severally as He will," has chosen to give to this man a method of communion with Himself quite different from ordinary

methods. In apt passages upon which his eye falls while turning the leaves of his Bible, he is constantly receiving direct messages from his Lord. Where there might be uncertainty a reduplication is given in a second or third text containing and emphasizing the same thought. The rapt attention of the student need be no mystery; it is the sheep hearing the voice of the shepherd, the soldier listening to the voice of his commander, the friend hearkening to the voice of the "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

After a time the turning of the leaves stopped. The book lay open at the passage recognized as the special message for the present. With his finger on the words he leaned over the seat in front and addressed a rough-looking man who occupied it.

"Will you listen to this word?" he said, "and see if there is not a message in it for you? 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.' Now the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking to you in these words. If you are one of His sheep you will hear His voice, and you will follow Him. He is a good master. If you give yourself.to Him He would not part with you for a thousand worlds."

The rough-looking man looked furtively up into the speaker's face,—

"If you knew what business I follow," he said, "you would not speak to me like that."

"It does not matter what you are," was the reply. "His voice is calling to you in that verse that I have read to you. You know that He is speaking to you now. It would be well for you to hear, and put your hand in His at once."

"I am a tavern-keeper," was the answer, as though that settled the matter.

"That makes no difference. The Lord is speaking to you just as you are. Answer Him as the child Samuel did, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.'"

"But if I were to give up the tavern I don't know what else I could do."

"I do not ask you to give up the tavern," was the

surprising rejoinder. "All I ask is that you will listen to the voice that is now calling you. Listen to it, answer it. Keep on listening and doing what He tells you to do. If He lets you stay in the tavern, then stay there ; but if He tells you to leave it, He will go before you and lead you the right way out of it and into something else."

The brakeman passed through the car, calling out the name of the next station. The rough-looking man rose, picking up a hand-bag at his feet. He turned and looked seriously into the kind eyes regarding him with the solicitude of "one bearing precious seed." The two men clasped hands and parted.

Whether the seed sown germinated or not may never be known till "the day shall declare it." But the tall traveller was acting upon his orders,—"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand, for thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether both shall be alike good."

Dear reader, "The Man With the Book" has been introduced to you.

THE MAN WITH THE BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

HIS BOYHOOD.

JOHN ROSS was born in Dornoch, the county town of Sutherlandshire, on the 11th of November, 1821. He was the firstborn, and round him clustered many tender hopes which, in the years to come, were not to be disappointed. He inherited no title to broad lands or social rank, for it was the humble home of a Scottish farmer that was gladdened by the advent of the blue-eyed boy. But in a godly ancestry, with all the natural and spiritual benefits flowing from it, he had a more precious possession, one that the world can neither give nor take away.

Something of the character of these god-fearing progenitors may be gathered from an incident recorded of his great grandfather, who was a blacksmith. A farmer had brought a span of horses to be shod. He was in a hurry, and before the work was completed was impatient to be off, saying, "That will do; that will do." "Man," replied the old hero, "man, it *won't* do. I'm doing it for eternity."

John's grandfather, George McKay, son of this worthy, and following the same trade, was also a man of note as an advanced Christian, and of a strong and most interesting character. "The men," in a Highland community, were the experienced Christians who were able to "speak to the question" in the great Friday gathering at communions, or to lead in prayer, or to explain the spiritual difficulties of inquirers. George McKay was not only one of "The men," his ordinary

title was Duine Righ-lochan, *The Man* of King-lochan. *The Man* of any locality among us is usually the great, specially rich or influential man. But so decidedly did the things of God occupy the uppermost place throughout those Highland parishes that, with them, The Man was the one, blacksmith or laird, who was pre-eminent in the knowledge and service of God. This godly grandfather had a share all his own in laying the foundations of the boy's character.

John's mother was a remarkable person. She inherited much of the piety and peculiar ability of his father and grandfather. The description of the wise woman in Proverbs might almost be rewritten as a description of her. Wonderful stories are told of her skill in "working willingly with her hands." "She opened her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue was the law of kindness." It was a large-hearted kindness, accompanied by a quick sort of wit that could lodge an arrow in the heart of an evil-speaker with a very short word. Her delight was to "stretch out her hands to the poor" and needy, and actions which some regarded as extravagances of benevolence have been recorded of her. The characters of both father and mother have been preserved in a remark meant to be criticism rather than praise: "Bessie Ross would give away her last loaf, and David would never say her nay."

His father was a man of deeds rather than words, physically powerful, and strong in principle and purpose. Thoroughness characterized all he did, and the most unwearying diligence. A neighbor in the new land, who took some pride in his own early rising, laid his complaint in the following terms: "Let me get up as early as I will, David Ross's axe is aye ahead of me." Something of his energy may be gathered from the fact that, when over eighty years of age, he set out to walk from Embro to Kincardine, a distance of nearly one hundred miles. He made the journey as he intended, with only a few stopping-places by the way.

John's mother acted upon the proverb: "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare

for his crying." When punishment was necessary, it was her habit to pull a little switch from the heather broom with which to administer it. One of his earliest recollections was of seeing his mother turn to that broom in the corner, and begin to pull at a bit of the heather. He could remember distinctly the thoughts that ran swiftly through his brain : "How shall I stop mother? It's no use telling her it will hurt. It's no use crying ; I've tried that before." But a bright idea flashed in upon the perplexed mind.

"Mother," he said, as she tugged still at the tough switch, "you will soon use the broom up, if you go on like this."

The shrewd child had made a point, though not quite the one intended. The tugging at the switch lost its energy, and his mother's sides began to shake with suppressed laughter. A moment more, and she turned her back on the broom and let the laugh ring out. The little boy knew he was safe for that time.

John McKay, afterwards a respected citizen of Kincardine, Ont., was for many years our hero's boon companion. At one time the two boys were for days very earnestly engaged in constructing a little mill. The mill required a dam to be thrown across the rattling Highland stream, by whose side the mill stood. The work went on steadily and rapidly until it came suddenly to a complete stand for want of timber. This was very perplexing. Giving up the enterprise was not to be thought of ; but where would they get some sticks? Had they been among the forests of Canada, no such difficulty would have existed. But they were then in Scotland, where trees are the wealthy man's pride and every stick has a market value.

Again a bright idea shed light upon the difficulty. There was a sheep shed at the end of the fold, which evidently was of no use whatever. The two little lads agreed that the sheep were not now ever brought up into the fold, let alone penned up in the shed. It was plain (while summer's sun was shining) that the shed had outlived its usefulness, and there was splendid

timber in its roof. Why not pull it down? No sooner said than done. The two boys were up in a twinkling, and the sods and thatch were flying in all directions. It was well for the sheep that not many minutes of this work went on till it was descried from the cottages, and such a hue and cry was raised that, at its first note, the young marauders scrambled down from the roof and ran away, never to return to that enterprise.

Another boyish plan they had, which made a deeper impression upon John Ross's memory. Away up on the mountain there was a huge stone. So high was it, and leaning so much out from the mountain side that it was for some time an object of fear. "What if it should smash over just when I was below it," was the thought with which its possible pathway would be crossed.

But there was a fascination about that stone. The grandeur of the roll it would make down the mountain if once started took deep hold of his imagination. The two companions talked the matter over with some of the other boys. They were all agreed that the stone should be started.

But there was one serious obstacle. Directly on the path along which the boulder must crash stood a little cottage inhabited by the grandmother of one of the boys. It would not do to hurt that old woman. But one day she was noticed shutting her door and taking the path that led to her son's house some distance away. Now was the time!

The rest of the boys were quickly summoned, and the matter put before them by the seven-year-old orator somewhat in this shape,—

"The old woman is out of her house and safe. If the stone were to go now there would be no danger of doing her any harm, and as for the house, would it not be the best thing that could happen her to have it smashed? It is not a very nice thing for a poor feeble old woman to be living alone. She would be far more comfortable if she were living with her son." Her grandson, who was one of the party, was appealed to for his opinion, and quite approved of the idea.

All were agreed. A crow-bar was obtained, and a spade, and operations commenced at once. Very carefully at first they tried to pry the rock up from behind, afraid lest it might yield too suddenly and carry them with it. Gentle hints were found to be of no use, and soon they were digging and prying and tugging away with might and main. The boulder did not move. A rest was taken and the situation discussed. It was a genuine council of war. A further manful attack was decided on and resolutely made. But the grim old rock, which was really an out-jutting shoulder of the mountain itself, did not even laugh at their scratches, but conducted itself exactly as if they were not there. The discomfited heroes had to pick up their tools and turn their faces homewards with at least one lesson on their own feebleness and the "strength of the hills" which "is His also."

When John was eight years old the family came out to Canada. A heavy storm overtook them at sea. The memory of that experience lived vividly in the boy's mind. The thought of shipwreck in the midst of such a night of darkness and tempest was one to tax the faith of the strong men and women on board. But it was not a panic-stricken crowd that thronged the tossing vessel. The fear of God was among them, and where that is strong other fears do not take the same hold. Echoes of that night of anxiety and godly converse have sounded down through the intervening years.

The children had been put to bed, but John could not sleep. The thought of perishing in those seething waters,—going down into their depths, being tossed and then swallowed up by them—would not go out of his head. But along with that came two other thoughts —*God rules these winds and waters* and *God hears prayer.* The child is the father of the man. The boy of eight did just what the man of twenty, forty or sixty would have done. He began to lift up his heart in prayer to God, but with the heart went the voice as well, for he prayed with all his might

"John," said his mother, "John, you must be quiet."

"Oh, mother," he replied, "must I not cry loud to God to save us?"

"Then they cried unto God in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distresses. Then were they glad because they were quiet; so He brought them into their desired haven."

They reached Canada in safety, and made their home in the township of West Zorra, in Oxford county, Ontario, forming part of that remarkable settlement that has given many men of influence to the present generation.

It may be understood from the character of those men who took possession of the hills and levels and beautiful rolling land around Embro that the church and the school would not merely follow them; it was necessary that these institutions should go with them. Very early they were formed into a congregation, and the Rev. Donald McKenzie, whose memory Mr. Ross always delighted to honor, was chosen as their minister.

They must have been excellent stock, those Highlanders of Ross and Sutherland. Soon was laid low a generation of forest trees, and there rose up in place a generation of scholars and men of might. Up to the year 1894 thirty-eight young men from amongst them have studied for the ministry, probably quite as many for medicine, and a goodly number more in other professions appear in circles of influence throughout the Dominion.

What is the secret of so much ambition and power?

Mr. Ross regarded it as a peculiar seal to Mr. McKenzie's ministry that so many of his young men rose up to offer themselves for the work of the Lord. Much of their early literary training he did himself, giving them lessons in the classics when they could not at the time have made their way to the grammar schools.

But a further explanation is to be found in the class of settlers themselves, for Mr. McKenzie had prepared material with which to work. Nearly all the families about Embro were from those godly communities so richly blessed during the early years of this century under Dr. McDonald of Ferintosh, Mr. Kennedy of Dingwall, and men of like peculiar spiritual gifts.

"Times of refreshing" had visited them—times to be remembered. God had set His eye upon those Highland settlements in the old land, so soon to be scattered by the great landowners. He prepared them for a blessed scattering by first filling them with His own salvation. Then, when many little farms were put together to form great sheep farms, and the old tenants had to seek new homes in a strange land, they carried with them a fervent piety and large knowledge of the word of God which constituted them men of thought and principle and power. It need be no matter of surprise when the sons of such men rise up and step into the highest places in the land.

But to go back to the little boy of eight, who had "cried loud to God to save them" when in the midst of the storm. His first exploit on American soil was a very questionable one in the eyes of those good Scotch housewives. Before reaching their final port, they touched—probably at Newfoundland, and tarried there a whole day. Some of the women went ashore with their pots to do a little washing. John Ross and his companion got leave to accompany them, and spent some delightful hours investigating the peculiarities of this new world. A snake crossed their path, and the valiant pair succeeded in dealing him blows enough to mangle his body and terminate his career. Their glory in the achievement knew no bounds. John Ross picked up the mutilated snake on the end of his stick, swung it around his head and sent it flying through the air. The uncanny creature dropped into one of the precious household pots, and the consternation, not only of the owner, but of all the band of women there, was entirely out of proportion with the extent of the damage done. That pot was emptied and scoured, and filled and emptied again, as though the poor little dead snake had been a ceremonially unclean thing, and the boy that hurled it fell under wrath in keeping with the horror his act had occasioned.

His doings in the Zorra home were quite in line with the above. Among the things that his careful father

had bought before venturing into the wild woods was a rather large parcel of gunpowder. Most of this hung on the wall in a shining powder-horn. But the horn would not hold the whole of it, and John knew where, above the cupboard, still in the paper parcel, the remainder had been put. That paper parcel was an object of much interest to this Highland boy.

One day, when alone in the house, he climbed up to it, opened a little hole in one corner, and allowed about a thimbleful to run through into a small paper funnel of his own making. Quickly the parcel was put back into its place, the top of the funnel doubled up over its contents, and the whole thrust into his pocket. Then down he came again, excited and afraid, for his conscience was not quite easy.

He showed his prize to John McKay, and the two boys made wondrous experiments by themselves in the woods. The laying of trains, the management of the fire and the achieving of real explosions made them as happy and important as if they had been blasting mountains.

All this was too delightful not to be ventured again. Another and another tiny parcel of powder was secretly obtained from the same store until, to John's regret, there was very little of it left.

Pondering the situation, wondering whether he should venture to take any more, he suddenly decided upon one bold and final exploit. Snatching the whole parcel, with all that was in it, he crowded it into his pocket and ran away. The play must come to an end soon now anyway. Why not have one grand exhibition and be done with it?

John McKay was ready for anything. They went this time farther into the woods than usual, lest the noise of the final explosion should attract attention. They piled the whole of the remaining powder in a portentous heap, laid their train, arranged their tow, and struck the flint and steel for a spark. The tow caught fire, and the train began to turn in the desired direction. But, whatever was the reason, it's action was slow—

too slow for the eager Celtic nature looking on. John Ross stretched himself at full length upon the ground and breathed just one good blow-ow, to help it along. The instantaneous roar that followed he never forgot. That one breath had wafted a spark from the smouldering train to the heap of powder, and the pile went off like the firing of a cannon. The remarkable thing was that this inexperienced gunner escaped without injury from the very dangerous experiment, though his face at the moment was not many inches from the powder. The force of the explosion had gone in another direction. Not even his hair was singed. But his heart quaked. The terrible danger from which he had been protected, even while he knew he was doing wrong, made a deep impression upon him.

"I rather think," he said, in telling the story, "that explosion is the secret of the dislike I have always had to playing with firearms, and I have never tried to overcome it."

John was a vigorous lad, and joined in the athletic sports of his schoolboy days with the same vehemence with which he gave himself to weightier interests in later days. Shinty was especially glorious. His clear eye and strong, steady hand enabled him to excel in that sport, and his ardor in its pursuit was not to be cooled either by sore shins or the breaking of a front tooth by the careless throwing of the wooden ball.

"When a boy," he said, "my shins were scarcely ever free from wounds. To this day they are marked all over with old scars. Tokens of many a hard fought game."

But as he grew a little older, books began to claim attention as well as games. Once he found what treasures of thought and knowledge were stored away in them, he bent his energies in that direction. Buying books at that time was not to be thought of. But many of these emigrant homes possessed a few choice volumes; and by judiciously drawing upon these stores, he seldom was without reading matter. But when was he to get time to read them? When school was over in those

early days, work was expected of everyone big enough to help. The evenings were very short, and all must go to bed at the appointed hour. It was a tight place for an eager student.

On one occasion he had borrowed a copy of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. When bedtime came he was not half done, and it was desperately hard to leave the book and go off to sleep. Indeed, sleep would not come. He lay with his eyes wide open, and his busy brain following the story and reaching out to its completion. At last the even breathing of all around assured him that sleep had taken hold of everyone but himself. Now was the time! He would take another little peep at the book.

Softly he rose, uncovered the coals, laid on a few sticks of the kindling set ready for the morning's fire, and sat down on the warm brick hearth with his book. Stick after stick of the kindling was added, until the whole morning's store was gone. The light waxed dim. Nearer and nearer went the head that the glow of the coals might fall on the page. His head got very hot. Reaching up to the pin on the wall, he snatched from it his Scotch bonnet, and donned it for protection. Now there could be peace! and soon he was lost to everything except the charm of the play. Heat that broke in through the spell made him suddenly clap his hand on his bonnet. A hole was burnt through it, and was quickly getting bigger and bigger. Here was trouble.

He extinguished the fire, and examined the extent of the damage. The hole was large enough to put a teacup through it—hopelessly large for concealment. Well he knew that much worse than the heather switch would be his portion if the matter were discovered. So he rolled up the bonnet in a tight ball, and hid it in a hole between the logs of the house. Then he crept back to bed, feeling very unhappy.

The dead coals and missing kindling in the morning led to trouble enough, but no one asked after the bonnet. As the weather was warm, he sped off to school with a bare head, and nothing was noticed. When the cold, autumn days came, it was impossible to go bare headed

any longer. Carefully was the damaged article drawn from its hiding place, straightened out, and carried judiciously in hand until out of sight of home.

"It was remarkable," he would say, "how well mannered I suddenly became. No sooner did my father appear, or any of my superiors come in sight, than the bonnet was reverently taken off, and carried properly in hand while they were in the company."

The boy who could get so much absorbed in the unreal world of the poets, was sometimes a serious perplexity to his most thrifty and energetic father. While his hands were at his work, his mind was still busy with his books. One winter evening the cattle had been tethered in the stable, but not yet fed. As John came in from school, he was told to feed and bed them. Obediently he went at once, but, forgetting his orders, and feeling, not thinking, that it was morning instead of evening, he unloosed them all and turned them out into the barnyard.

The preceding incidents show plainly that John Ross was a boy full of life and fun and ambition. Whether it was a hard mathematical problem or a school fight, a game of shinty or a tough debate, he was always ready, and whatever he did he did with all his might. He who in manhood's prime began to be known as the Man with the Book, was not, in his early days, one of those quiet and thoughtful lads, whose story makes other boys feel that they were made of different stuff from themselves. He was felt by his companions to be "a boy every inch of him," and one with real and serious faults besides.

The Captain who took and drilled this fiery young Highlander into "a good soldier of Jesus Christ," is seeking for recruits now, dear young reader.

I would not ask you to try to be a Christian if our Captain were dead, for you could never make yourself into anything like a real Christian if you tried forever. But He is *not* dead. He is living and risen, and sitting at the right hand of Power. Not only is He risen. He is very soon coming back again to enlist an army for

Himself that shall in very deed conquer this old rebellious world to His sway. Indeed, He may be gathering up His recruits for that grand conflict and victory even now.

Dear young reader, you have only one life to live—one chance to take sides in this great battle of the universe. Do you not want to join the winning side? For Christ's side is going to win, and that most gloriously, even in this world. If you want to be His, just tell him so, for he is hunting recruits. Look up in His face and say to Him, "Lord, be thou my Captain," and then take up as the keynote of your daily life Paul's question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Probably the first thing He may give you to do will be work you do not like, as He gave to Paul some severe study over his own sinfulness and helplessness and blindness. Do not be discouraged. That is often the very first part of His *drill*. Only keep close to Him with the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me—poor, sinful, useless me—to do?" and He will lead and drill you wonderfully, as He did the Highland boy of whom you have been reading.

CHAPTER II.

DAWNINGS OF THE BETTER LIFE.

MR. ROSS seldom spoke of his own inner experiences, except as they might be interwoven with some precious word of Scripture, or as they came out incidentally when talking of something else. It is, therefore, impossible to trace closely his pathway across that "very wide field" lying between the City of Destruction and the Wicket Gate. A few glimpses can be caught, but rather of those that helped to start him on the pilgrim's life than of himself or his own doings in the earlier stages of the journey.

The God to whom he cried aloud in the storm at sea was a great reality to him all through those youthful days. He would often forget, as other boys do, and run on his own road full of the trifles of the day, yet in the midst of his sports, and fishing and studies the great question of *eternity* would often come up for consideration. This boy knew that life is short. The early death of a schoolfellow from scarlet fever brought the reality and certainty and possible nearness of death vividly home to his young heart. "What must I do to be saved?" was a question often asked in the dark, quiet hours of the night. Yet John Ross did not turn his back definitely on the City of Destruction.

The fear of God reigned in his early home. His grandfather and great grandfather, like Christian of old, "pilgrims of note," drew his young enthusiasm strongly out to a pilgrim's life. He wished himself one of their company, yet he lingered still about the City of Destruction.

When the rebellion broke out in 1837 he was nearly

sixteen. His parents saw with anxiety that the eye of their eldest born was turned towards the camp. They knew the nature they had to deal with, and laid their plans accordingly.

"John," said his father one day, "I think you may go back to school again for a while."

That was enough. Back to school he went, and the camp was forgotten.

Who was his teacher? What an important matter to a boy just shaping for eternity! He was a young divinity student, with the bloom of the Scottish heather still upon his cheek. Short of stature, with a long face and kindly, intelligent eyes, and with a wealth of the most exuberantly curly brown hair that ever crisped to northern mists and breezes.

"I never knew anyone," Mr. Ross once said, "who came so close to my idea of what a divinity student should be as Mr. Lachlan McPherson in those days. It was his habit occasionally to have a close, serious talk with his scholars. In one of these talks his subject was *Attendance at the House of God.* He said that he had noticed us Sabbath after Sabbath in that respect; that, though some of us were regularly in our places there, others were absent oftener than he could understand, unless there were dangerous carelessness on the subject. He continued somewhat in this strain: What God may yet do for those of you who are careless about His house, no one may tell; but this much I can tell: *The fear of God is not yet in your hearts.* Go on as you are doing, and you will go through life 'having no hope, and without God in the world.' But of you who are serious and careful to be in your places every Sabbath day, I will say this: Of you I have a strong hope that God will yet show Himself and His salvation to you, and 'make you joyful in His house of prayer.'"

"As a family," Mr. Ross went on, "we were regularly at church; but in those early days it was not always easy to have dress and hat and boots just as young people think suitable for appearing among others. I knew as he spoke that I had allowed these things

to influence me more than I should in deciding whether to go out on Sabbath or not. I saw then that I had been risking eternity for a bit of pride. That was a good talk for me."

Why was it "a good talk?" Because it was *laid to heart*. It was "a wise reprover upon an *obedient ear*."

May it not be that here was the definite turning of his back upon the City of Destruction, and setting his face to the way of the pilgrim? He was some time in getting across the "very wide field," but thenceforth he began to be known as one "inquiring the way to Zion with his face thitherward."

"What manner of man" was this young school teacher, whose serious talk was so much blessed to his scholar? What manner of boy was he? Lachlan McPherson as a boy will reveal the secret springs in the life of Lachlan McPherson as a man. When he was a child of nine the family was moving from one part of Scotland to another. While spending a night at an inn his mother was taken suddenly and alarmingly ill. In the morning hope for her life was almost gone. The awfulness of the sorrow with which he was threatened entered into the boy's soul. What could he do? He *could not* give up his mother. So he crept, child as he was, into a quiet closet in that roadside inn, and, throwing himself down on the floor, pleaded with God for mercy. He told God He could do *anything*. He could save his dear mother if He only would. He urgently asked Him to spare her life, and, growing bolder, he pleaded that she should be left with him for *forty years more!*"

"God heard my prayer," recorded the man of seventy. "He raised up my mother and gave her back to me for the forty years I asked, and added several more. Many a time since I have thought of his goodness."

On one occasion, while he was in company with several young people, the conversation turned upon the wisdom of reading the Bible through from beginning to end.

Mr. McPherson did not express any dogmatic opinion, but said he would tell how it was with himself.

"When I was a boy at school," he said, "several of us agreed to start at the beginning of the Bible and see who would keep at it the longest,—especially who would persevere till he reached the end of the book. We began, and the thought of not being beaten kept me to our purpose until I had read through the Levitical law and into Joshua. After that, interest itself carried me on, so that I had no disposition to stop. One after another the rest dropped out. Before long I was the only one left. By the time I had finished I was more eager to begin it again than I had been to start it at first. The Bible stories gained interest every time they were read, and when through it the second time I began at the beginning again.

"I think I may say," he added, not solemnly, but gladly and tenderly, "that God made Himself known to me first in that continuous reading of His own word."

Admiring intercourse with such a young teacher as this may help to account for the steady set Biblewards which John Ross's religion had from the beginning to the end.

Unlike many young disciples, the boy John Ross did not attempt to keep his interest in the things of God a profound secret. He had the courage to go with his difficulties to those fitted to give him instruction, and so the foundation of his religious character and knowledge were laid deep and broad. His special, chosen counsellor during all those early years of concern was one of the elders of the Embro congregation, Mr. Alexander Murray.

A rare man was he, with a powerful mind and a profound knowledge of scripture. He had, besides, what is, perhaps, rarer than these, that sympathetic kindliness which attracts the young. The friendship between these two was very beautiful and strong.

"Often," the elder man said, years after, "often I used to mentally set before me John Ross and my own four boys, and wonder which of the five I loved the most. But I could never tell."

Many a time the schoolboy would go over to his friend's home carrying his Bible. Before the talk began the two would kneel down together and seek the guidance of Him who alone "teacheth to profit." Then the boy brought out his difficulty, and the man showed the broad teaching of Scripture upon it.

One night in harvest time, Mr. Murray, as was often the case when the weather was exceedingly warm, had gone to sleep in the barn among the fragrant fresh hay. He awoke with the first streak of light, and found, to his surprise and pleasure, that he was not alone. John Ross was sleeping at his side and the Bible lay between them. The lad had come over in the evening for one of their talks. Finding the lights out in the house, and guessing that he would find the man he wanted among the hay, he had climbed into the loft, hoping that sleep had not yet claimed him. Disappointed in this, he lay down by his friend, with the book between them, ready for the talk as soon as morning light should wake them.

As the boy became a man, and the man became a student, the friendship only waxed closer and stronger. Very frequently, as years and diligence added to the knowledge of the younger man, conversation took the form of argument. Up to the time of entering college, though he delighted in doing his best to meet the arguments of his friend, yet he constantly felt his own inferiority as to grasp of the subjects and breadth of knowledge.

"It was not until after my first year in college," he said, "when I got hold of Jonathan Edwards, that I began to find myself able to cope with him."

A touching evidence of the strength of the affection between these two was given not many years ago.

Mr. Murray was a very old man, approaching ninety years of age. His powerful mind was losing its grasp of many things and would often get completely astray as to the chronology of events and even the identity of persons. His son, Dr. Murray, of Kincardine, visited him shortly before his death, and, though he often called him by his own name and recognized him per-

fectly, he quite as often called him John Ross, and spoke to him as his young friend of early days.

Mr. Ross knew of his failing health, and became very desirous of seeing once more the friend to whom he owed so much.

When he was ushered into the room, the old man rose, took his hand in both of his, and said with deep feeling—

"The Lord bless you, John Ross, for showing me this kindness in my old age."

Then they sat down, and had a few hours of happy converse. The clear intellect of former times came back again. They went over "all the way the Lord had led them," and "took sweet counsel together" as of old. They sat down to the table and had tea, and up to the final handshake the happy intercourse continued. But scarcely had the dearly beloved Timothy turned from his door when the old man tottered to his bed. There he lay almost without a word for about a week, and then passed away to be "forever with the Lord." The strong feeling and unwonted mental exercise of those bright hours of converse were too much for the failing physical frame. It was not a fiery chariot, but a chariot of purest love and joy that was sent to summon him from earth.

During these days of early religious anxiety, a communion was held at Embro.

For the benefit of those who are not acquainted with the methods of these old Highland communions, it may be well to explain a little. The celebration of the ordinance on Sabbath is preceded by three days of religious services, and followed by Monday as a day of thanksgiving. The Friday meeting is the most characteristic of these extra services. It is devoted especially to prayer, and to a general discussion calculated to help Christians in the work of self-examination. The public discussion is called "speaking to the question." After a season of prayer and singing, one of the ministers requests that someone in the congregation shall suggest a passage of Scripture that may open the discussion. Usually one of "the men"—the old established elders

of repute—rises and gives a text containing some test or pre-eminent marks of the true Christian, and briefly opens it up to the best of his ability. Others follow, each giving his own views or experience, and seeking to shed light on the subject. This is the people's service, and the ministers as much as possible leave it to them. Sometimes interesting and helpful views of truth are received from unexpected quarters.

At the Friday service of the communion mentioned, the preliminary exercises had been gone through, the time for the discussion had come, and the request had been made that someone should open the question. The usual few minutes of waiting were slowly ticking themselves away, for those old Highlanders were never in unseemly haste to put themselves to the front. Suddenly to the amazement of all, a stripling rose from amongst the people and proposed a text. The old people listened with breathless attention while the lad gave forth the verse, and in a very few words made plain the point in it that needed elucidation. He was at the time deeply interested in the subject of discussion, and was not afraid, youth though he was, to stand up in the presence of the most august assembly he had ever known, and ask the question upon which he was searching for light. "From that day," my informant writes, "John was a marked man, and was expected to do something great "

There was another whose special mission to this young pilgrim was not helping him out of the Slough of Despond, but keeping him from any expectation of help from a residence in the town of Morality. He was a young minister recently out from Scotland, Mr. Allan, afterwards of North Easthope. Very brothers these two men became in later years, but at this time they were far apart.

Mr. Allan occasionally preached in Mr. McKenzie's pulpit.

"Many a night you kept me awake," Mr. Ross said to him years afterward. "The arrows from your bow went right home, and they were so barbed that it was impossible to draw them out again. Once after service,

as I was watching you coming down from the pulpit, and one and another of the congregation speaking and shaking hands with you, my own internal comment was, "I would as soon shake hands with the *lightning*."

From the facts already given it will easily be understood that John Ross had no trouble in shaking off worldly companions. As soon as he began to "show his colors" as a recruit for Christ's army, these all dropped away from him of their own accord.

"I was an old man when I was a boy," he said in later life, "and now I am a boy when I am an old man."

The word of God was his companion. Not only was it read but studied. Not only studied, but large portions of it committed to memory, that every clause and phrase might be mastered, and that it might also be ready for thought when no books were at hand.

On one occasion he was prevented from going to church. As soon as the rest of the family had gone and he was left in quietness, he took his Bible and seriously went to work to master the Epistle to the Hebrews. If memory has preserved the story correctly, the whole of it was "hid in his heart" by the time the churchgoers had returned. At another time he learned the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm in the same way. This was not merely an occasional thing. He was constantly at it till the whole field of Scripture was his own.

This early, whole-hearted study of the Word of God was sowing seed in seed time, and it yielded to the student a rich and abundant harvest in after days. It is enough to make one's heart ache to see young Christians and Sabbath scholars spending their one seedtime sowing nothing better in their memories than pretty Sabbath school stories. Dear young people, do you want to be strong, living, growing Christians? Go to work now, using your precious Sabbath hours and week day leisure storing heart and memory with chapter after chapter of the Word of God. As you study it lift up your heart in the prayer, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Study and pray, pray and study, and boldly put into practice

what you find, and see what the results will be. That word so studied was to John Ross a "lamp to his feet and a light to his path," and "the joy and rejoicing of his heart" all the days of his life.

But when and how did he definitely pass from death unto life? When and how was he "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son?"

The only time so far as known, when he spoke directly on that point, was in a very interesting letter written a year or two before his death. The anti-Roman strain of the letter is really the heart of it. It was called forth by the fear that the friend to whom it was addressed, had been led to take a dangerously superficial view of the difference between Christ and Anti-Christ. His own experience is characteristically given, not for its own sake, but to help in bringing out into strong relief the truth he is seeking to explain and impress.

"If I am born again," he writes, "my spiritual birth took the most pronounced anti-Roman form. I first fled from God and the Gospel, to which my heart refused to bow, though I was still believing it. I fled on down to dark despair, and for years refused to leave that loathsome dungeon. At last in my dungeon or den, God gave me a sight of myself, which made me feel that there was not an eye among all God's creatures that could endure to turn one look on such a man. With this sense of overwhelming shame at its height, I sprang over at one bound to God for covering, saying,—'If thou wilt not look on me, no creature can.' That one leap changed my relation and attitude towards the universe. I fled from all God's creatures to Himself as my hiding place. Freedom from human—say rather creature—authority, in all matters concerning God and my soul, is one characteristic of my spiritual liberty to this day, and it had its birth in that leap. If I allow the church to put hand or foot into that domain, I make the church an idol there and then If the church lays claim to such a dominion, she sets herself up to be the most fearful idol ever set up under the sun. There is

Rome for you! Look at her! I leaped over her and away from her, among the rest of created things, when I made the Eternal my refuge.

"Look at *me* again and say, what would Roman works have done for me in my position when about to take that leap? I have no words to describe or convey my sense of the mockery done to the poor soul—the snare laid before him—the affront done to God, and the blindness of those who lead and those who follow in that whole great business of work which Rome is carrying on. It is better to spring over to Him who is 'in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.'"

Such is his own account of the manner of his passing from death unto life.

His experience as given above, is evidently the root out of which sprang many of his remarkable utterances. The hope of utter hopelessness! The power of utter helplessness! The necessity of the hopelessness in order to the hope! of the realized helplessness in order to effective junction with the Source of the "power that worketh in us!" This is pre-eminently the "secret of the Lord" which is "with them that fear Him." The experimental knowledge of this is what makes the difference between a Christian life of constant failure and one of joyful communion and conquest. Paul knew it when he sang,—"When I am weak, then am I strong." He did not look at weakness and infirmity as disqualifications, but only as giving larger opportunity for Christ to show His own strength. Paul preached it when he said,—"Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." But the fulness of joy and power in the second clause can be apprehended only by those who have discovered the actual reality of the first. It is "all plain to him that understandeth." To such the following utterances will be full of interest. And may it be that some who have not caught the great double truth before may get a first glimpse as they now read.

While quite a young man he spoke impressively to his hearers at one of his mission stations. "You *will*

not receive Christ while there is *one white spot* on you."* These searching words have been echoing in that place ever since. They were recently communicated to the writer by one of his hearers.

Many years later, at a prayer meeting, he unravelled the perplexities of an inquirer by one short sentence, as deeply true as it is striking: "'Blessed are the pure in heart.' The pure in heart is the one who sees himself to be *utterly impure.*" He made his meaning plainer by a homely, but most apt illustration. "A slovenly woman," he said, "cannot see dirt. But put a tidy woman into a dirty house, and she feels and is distressed with every spot that is about her. That is because she has a *clean heart.*"

Several times since has this been passed on to some of God's precious ones, much cast down at their own unworthiness. Tears have started with the quick revulsion of feeling to see, in their own painful consciousness of vileness, a God-given proof of purity of heart in His sight.

On one occasion Mr. Ross was impressed with a similar thought uttered by an old man "speaking to the question."

"Ever since the Lord took me in hand, I have been sore vexed at my sins. They were so great and so many, and my good deeds were so few and so small. But lately I have come to see it differently. I see now that I am *all* sin, and I have no good deeds at all. I can do nothing now but let myself alone and take hold of the name of the King—'The Lord our Righteousness.' The Lord our righteousness? But that is enough."

"When I heard him speak," the listener remarked, "I thought of the law to the priest about the leper.

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*Though the above statement is generally true, it is not universally so. There are some who are drawn by the loveliness of Jesus Christ to receive and rest upon Him, who, in the first instance, know very little of the plague of their own heart. This is frequently the case with those who believe on Him as little children. Let not these be troubled that the Good Shepherd leads them by a different and a gentler way than others.

If the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean. It is all turned white; he is clean. I looked at the old Christian, and said to myself: 'You are not long for this world. You are about ripe for Heaven now.'

"I was back at the next communion. He was not there. I asked after him, and found that he had been called away to behold 'the King in His beauty.'"

He referred in illustration of the same idea to a conversation with an old Highlander, who was once asked: "Were you ever perfectly happy?"

"Yes," he replied, "the first time it was made plain to me that the burden of my salvation *lay entirely upon the Lord.*"

In listening to a story like the one above, the hearer was not apt to miss the point. Mr. Ross was speaking what he experimentally understood, and the words, as he uttered them, had a significance that they might not have had in the lips of another.

This same experimental significance of words, often heard in vain, is illustrated in the following fact mentioned by one of the most gifted and spiritual of the members of his Brucefield congregation.

"I had walked for years in doubt and trouble, for I could not find how to come acceptably to Christ. One Sabbath Mr. Ross simply read out the verse: 'No man *can* come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.'"

"Then," she said, "I saw it plainly. I could not even do that myself, and God knew I could not. *He* had to do *the whole.* That was a great resting-place for me, and I have never lost the liberty I got then, just *looking to God to do the whole.*"

How was it that this word simply read out by his voice could have such power to bring liberty to a soul in bondage?

Was it not because the special truth that was in it had entered into his own soul, making him, as far as it was concerned, "meet for the Master's use?" Then the Spirit of Christ could use him in passing the power of that truth on to the soul of another.

One other instance may be given in which man's utter lack and God's abounding fulness came out in strong relief.

He had been reading Dr. John Duncan's exposition of the New Covenant, which he deeply enjoyed. He commented on it in the following strain,—

"The Covenant of Grace is *all promise.* In it God undertakes *to do the whole.* All we have to do, at every turn, is to keep at Him with the prayer, 'Do as thou hast said.' That is *taking hold of His covenant.* This is why the New Covenant exactly fits our need, for it comes to those who have no righteousness, no power, 'no good thing.'"

"Sweet on His faithfulness to rest,
Whose love can never end,
Sweet on the Covenant of Grace
For all things to depend.

Sweet in the confidence of faith
To trust His firm decrees.
Sweet to lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His."

CHAPTER III.

A CHAPTER IN CHURCH HISTORY.

A PECULIAR set of events, during these years of youth and early manhood, was working loyalty to Jesus Christ as king into the warp and woof of John Ross's religious life. The Ten Years' Conflict which preceded the Disruption in Scotland was now verging to the crisis. As the contest went on it was watched with the most intense and intelligent interest by the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland, to which body the congregation in Embro belonged. Mr. McKenzie, with whom Mr. Ross was taking classical lessons at the time, was deeply interested, and teacher and pupil watched together as the different phases of the struggle were developed. There was, indeed, at the time a very great deal of general interest and information on the subject throughout the whole country.

It is a sorrowful fact that very few of the young people of Canada have any correct knowledge either of the facts of the Disruption or the principles involved in it. But John Ross's life cannot be intelligently followed without a knowledge of both of these. It may be well, therefore, to give here a short account of the whole matter, though that takes us a long way back, back as far as the Reformation.

The history of the Ten Years' Conflict, stretching from 1833 to 1843, is often spoken of as the history of the Disruption. But the beginning of the "Conflict" dates further back than that. In the year 1556, some years before the Reformation really took possession of

Scotland, Knox was laboring a few months in his native land. One knotty problem was perplexing Protestant consciences at the time in many a cottage and castle: Is it lawful to attend the celebration of the mass? It was anxiously propounded to the great Reformer.

"It is nowise lawful in a Christian to present himself before that idol," was the unhesitating answer.

There is the clear ring of spiritual loyalty in it. No compromise, no serving of two masters. *That* is the important part. That is the beginning of the "Conflict." If there must not be two masters in the Church of Scotland, *who* is to be her "*one master?*" "Jesus Christ himself, as He speaks in His own word." That was the answer of the Reformer.

"The king is head of the Church," announced Henry VIII of England, and arrogated to himself the title and the rights appertaining thereto. In distinct contrast with that, the Reformers of Scotland proclaimed from the beginning that Jesus Christ and He alone is Head of the Reformed Church of Scotland. Neither were they empty protestations in the mouths of these men. In every item they watched and prayed and labored to make the word of the Head the rule of the Church. It was a practical and positive Headship they claimed for Jesus Christ. It was not the queen that was consulted in arranging the worship and doctrine of the Church, nor the nobles, nor tradition, nor inclination. With the utmost prayerfulness and diligence they consulted Jesus Christ himself, and out of His word they drew the constitution, doctrine and worship of the Church of Scotland.

Kings and queens and Acts of Parliament sometimes sanctioned but oftener marred the work of the Reformers. Still, through all opposition, through injustice and persecution, through attempted bribery and real deceit and intrigue, the fixed purpose of the Church, acting through her General Assembly, was ever to keep for Jesus Christ, and for Him alone, the position of Head of the Church of Scotland. Surely this is most reasonable. If the Church is His body, and that is what Scripture asserts, He must be her Head, or there is marvellous monstrosity somewhere.

James I. of England resorted to all the devices that cunning, linked with high-handed presumption, could contrive that he might insert some subversive, man-made contrivances (bishops especially) among the simple and beautiful machinery of the Scottish Church. He saw quite clearly that, if he could once establish his bishops, they would soon gain power to control the clergy, and the clergy would guide the people, then he would have his own hand on the helm, and that was precisely what he wanted—not Jesus Christ, but King James, was to be Head of the Church of Scotland.

He was met by the prolonged and intense resistance of the very heart of the Scottish nation. It is thrilling to read the story of the struggle in "McCrie's Life of Andrew Melville." "There were giants in the earth in those days."

In the end, by most unscrupulously thinning out the leaders, James partially accomplished his purpose. He effectually accomplished a purpose larger and far nobler than his own. He began to educate the Scottish people to understand the conflict between the two kings, each claiming the right to rule the Church of Scotland. King James or King Jesus, which should guide the consciences of Scotchmen? By his senseless and aggravating interferences, James taught Scotchmen to understand their own position and to prize it. No king but Christ Himself shall tell us how to regulate the affairs of His own house. Christ and He *alone* is Head of the Church of Scotland.

Charles followed his father, and carried his mad interferences further still, till Jennie Geddes threw her stool at the dean and the whole nation was stirred to its depth to say: "We will have no king over our kirk but Jesus Christ Himself." Then they bound themselves as individuals and as a nation to stand by the simplicity and purity of the faith and discipline laid down by the Reformers. The world looked on in wonder to see noblemen and tradesmen, laborers and lairds, vieing with each other in signing the Solemn League and Covenant, in which each signer pledged

himself and his all in support of the Crown Rights of the Redeemer.

Loyalty is a beautiful thing; it is a marvellously powerful principle. When Christianity develops in the shape of loyalty to Christ as King, it puts on its highest strength and appears in its most beautiful garments. Whole-hearted loyalty to Jesus Christ is the highest type of Christianity. It is the type that shall yet subdue the whole world to the Redeemer's sway. It is pre-eminently the type of Scottish religion in its best days. It was loyalty to Christ as King that devised the Covenant, and signed it, and stood to it—stood to it with an enthusiasm and obstinacy that few nations or individuals know how to combine. You often see enthusiasm, and oftener still obstinacy; but in combination they are rare.

And Charles had to yield and let them have their way. Charles had to abandon his purpose, but God accomplished His. He had given another and a deeper lesson to the Church and to the world—Christ, and He alone, must be Head of the Church.

Thirty years later, and another Stuart king sat on the throne of England. Charles the Second, light and flippant in everything else, was strongly determined in this: to reduce the Church of Scotland from its simple allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. Martyr blood flowed like water, and money was extorted by hundreds of thousands of pounds. Charles only partially accomplished his purpose, but again God accomplished His. The lesson this time had been so written out in letters of blood that it never could be forgotten: Christ, and He alone, at any cost, must be Head of the Church of Scotland.

The world looked on and wondered, for most people could not understand why Scotchmen would rather die than attend the ministry of the curates. But they knew it was for the rights of the Lord Jesus Christ that they were suffering. The spirit in which they met death in such a cause is seen in one who had fallen on the moor under his death-wound. Rising for a moment from a

pool of his own blood, he cried in a voice that has since echoed down the ages: "Though every hair on my head were a life, I would give them all for the Crown Rights of my Redeemer!"

James the Second followed for a terrible three years, and then came the Revolution. No more royal interference. The Church of Scotland was legally established in her double right—her right to receive her maintenance from the Crown, and, along with it, her infinitely more precious right to take her laws as a Church only from Christ, her King and Head.

Though legally free now in the possession of her rights, the Church of Scotland rose from the years of persecution in a terribly crippled condition for the exercise of them. The flower of her ministry were all swept away, perished among the 18,000 sufferers for the Crown Rights of Jesus Christ. Her pulpits were filled with half-hearted or positively antagonistic men, and they, with their elders, must constitute her General Assembly, through which alone she could authoritatively act. There were no trained, godly students ready to step into the vacancies as they should occur. The outlook was dark; but the heart of the people was generally true, and steadily the Church worked up towards efficiency as the years went by. Patronage was abolished, so that each congregation, as it became vacant, was left free to choose its own pastor, and to a considerable extent men of the right stamp were chosen. Left thus in the simple exercise of their legal rights, the people of Scotland in one generation would have filled the General Assembly with men as loyal to Christ as the sole Head of the Church as they were themselves.

For a few years this process went on. Then came the Union of England and Scotland in 1707. The then established rights of the Church of Scotland were solemnly guaranteed to her by the articles of union. But how was faith kept in this respect?

As Professor Gregg puts it in his short and valuable history: "In violation of these articles, an Act was

rushed through the British Parliament in 1712 restoring patronage, and virtually placing the appointment of ministers in the hands of the Government, of noblemen, and other parties or persons who might have no sympathy with the Church. Against this invasion of its liberties and violation of national faith the Church long protested, but protested in vain."

Bolingbroke, who introduced the bill, was a professed infidel. He did not pretend that, in transferring the right of choosing ministers from the God-fearing people of Scotland to the godless Government and worldly nobility, he was at all seeking to advance the cause of Christ. Everybody knew that the reintroduction of patronage was a direct violation of the articles of union to which the national faith had been pledged only five years before. But it put a vast amount of power into the hands of the new patrons, and the Scottish representation in the British Parliament was exceedingly small, so, with less opposition than should have been expected, the bill was rushed through and became law.

Bolingbroke accomplished his purpose. What was God's purpose? One thing was certainly accomplished —Christ's loyal people in Scotland passed through a time of testing far more severe than even the times of persecution. Pulpits were now chiefly filled by men of the world, and the people had no power to prevent it. The reign of "moderatism" began, and the darkest cloud the Reformed Church of Scotland had known, settled down upon her. The Church as an Assembly soon ceased altogether to contend for the rights of Jesus Christ, and gave itself rather with right goodwill to censuring and hindering those whose hearts were set upon the advance of Christ's real kingdom.

During the early years of the century an old book, "The Marrow of Modern Divinity," was largely circuated in Scotland, and began to fill many corners of the land with the fragrance of the doctrines of grace. Now these doctrines were not in repute among the generation of worldly ministers forming the mass of the General

Assembly in those days. Anything in the shape of a strong, living Christianity savored too much of the old Covenanters, and was misunderstood and looked upon with a jealous eye. The book was brought up before the Ecclesiastical bar, was tried, found guilty and condemned as a fanatical and dangerous production, and one that ought to be discountenanced in every possible way. Twelve of the most Godly ministers of the Church appeared before the Assembly and strongly "represented" the real character of the book, and of the doctrines of grace therein taught, and urged the reversing of the sentence pronounced against it. After much vexatious opposition, the twelve Representers were dismissed from the bar of the Assembly with rebukes and admonition, and narrowly escaped deposition as favorers of dangerous doctrines.

In 1732 the Evangelical minority in the Assembly to the number of more than forty ministers, presented an address asking for redress of grievances. They were supported by a petition signed by hundreds of elders and private Christians, earnestly asking action in the same direction. Both ministers and laymen were refused even a hearing, and the Assembly proceeded to act directly in the face of their requests. The decided opposition of the minority roused the Assembly to personal action against them, and four of their leaders, of whom Ebenezer Erskine was chief, were first suspended from the office of the ministry, and afterwards deposed. It was not now king or bishop or parliament that was fighting against the Crown Rights of Jesus Christ. It was the corrupted General Assembly herself. She pushed out of her midst the most valiant soldiers that were left, and then settled down to exactly a century of worldliness and stagnation.

The deposed men, separated from the Church of their fathers, protested that an unjust sentence could not exclude them from the office of the ministry, that they would still feed the flock of God as He might open doors for them. The four formed themselves in what they called the Associate Presbytery, and began at once to act as a properly constituted body.

Thus originated the Church of the Secession, which, during the dark century between 1733 and 1833 grew and multiplied, and held high the light of life among a "people that sat in darkness," till its ministers were numbered by hundreds, both in Scotland and England, and later in the Colonies and mission fields as well. Much "gold, silver and precious stones" were built by these builders upon the one foundation, while "wood, hay and stubble" were the order of the day in the Mother Church.

They were a people who knew much about self-denial. Excluded from the Establishment, they had no means of support but the voluntary offerings of their attached, but often humble congregations, who had not been trained thus to support their ministers as we are now. This state of matters developed much self-denial on the part of both ministers and people. But self-denial is excellent Christian gymnastics, and the Secession throve amazingly on it. That which at first was regarded as a disability, was soon found to be a source of power, and like Paul, they learned to glory in their infirmity that the power of Christ might rest upon them.

All this was right and proper. They found the voluntary method a good method. Very good. They found, as years went on, and its effects on all parties began to be tested, that the voluntary method is the best method. Better still. It was a grand discovery, and one for which the world should thank them. But they went further, and began to announce with more and more boldness that the voluntary method is the *only right* method for the support of Christ's cause. Had they rested in opinion no serious harm might have been done. But the instinct of the Caledonian mind is to go deep down past mere opinion, and find an everlasting principle at bottom —a principle which shall make the opinion, not only right, but necessarily and exclusively right, and all opposers, not only wrong, but necessarily and radically wrong.

The principle they evolved to prove their position was a new view of Christ's mediatorial office and claims.

Christ, they said, does most assuredly claim to be the Head of the Church, but He does *not* claim to be Head of the *nations*. He certainly claims the allegiance and service of kings and magistrates *as individuals*, but He asks nothing from them *as kings and magistrates* but the honest performance of their duties towards their fellow-men, diligently securing to all classes and individuals their rights as members of society. Not only does a king or magistrate owe no official duty to Jesus Christ or His cause, he has no *right* to use the powers of his office to advance that cause. For a civil ruler to endow a church is wrong, and for a church to accept endowment is another wrong.

This was materially different from the teachings of the Reformers, they had stoutly maintained not only the Headship of Christ over the Church, but also the glorious Headship of Christ over the nations. They maintained in terms that gave no uncertain sound, that it is the bounden duty of the Christian ruler of a Christian nation to endow and sustain the Church of Christ within it, wherever the circumstances are such as to make such a step advisable, and yet a still higher duty for him to leave the Church absolutely free from all control in matters spiritual. The Reformers taught that kings should be "nursing fathers and queens nursing mothers" to the Church whenever it needed such nursing. The Secession maintained that no such nursing was ever admissible at all.

This is what has been termed Voluntaryism. It holds high Christ's Kingship over the Church, but it robs Him of His Kingship over the nations—robs Him, except in a modified sense, of a title which He surely claims, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

There were several divisions and subdivisions, unions and reunions among these Seceders, till at last they became, about the middle of this century, the United Presbyterian Church, a Church almost identical in doctrine and discipline with the old Church of the Reformers, were it not for this one significant departure touching the Headship of Christ over the nations, or Voluntaryism.

Nearly a century passed away, and God seemed to have forgotten to be gracious to the poor, shackled Church of Scotland. But it was not so. His time was drawing near.

Thomas Chalmers, a "moderate" young minister, who cared more about winning distinction in mathematics than about winning souls to Christ, was brought in a very interesting way to know the Gospel as the "power of God unto salvation." He at once began to preach it and two young men were led to Christ by that first sermon. Soon the voice that was stirring the dry bones in the little village of Kilmany, was transferred to Edinburgh. The Power that descended in the day of Pentecost was in him, and life flowed from his lips and radiated from his pen. The genius of the man made way for the simplicity of the Gospel among the rich and cultured, and the simplicity of the man made way for him, and for it into the hearts and homes of the very poorest. After that, first in St. Andrews and then in Edinburgh itself he was called to the professor's chair. There, with the young men clustering about him in one long enthusiasm, he magnified Christ among them.

Another man of might was doing much the same work in the same spirit, Dr. Andrew Thompson, of St. George's, Edinburgh.

Largely through the influence communicated by means of these two men, a spring-time visited the long-forsaken Church of Scotland. Signs of life were everywhere. Whether God converted the "Moderate" ministers as he did young Chalmers, or converted the godless patrons so that they chose godly ministers, or so drew the young students to Himself that it became hard for the patrons to find a worldly one, I do not know. But the "Moderate" majority in the Assembly that had so long ruled for darkness and death began to find its numbers diminishing. The godly minority that, during the darkest days, had been lifting up a voice for the King, saw its numbers increasing. In 1833 the Evangelicals were in the majority, and could now manage the affairs of Christ's Kingdom in His interest and under His guidance.

But it is not wise to make too many changes at once. What should they seek first to set right?

One of the most grievous things during all these years of Moderatism had been the setting over congregations by the mere will of the patron, men nowise fitted for the office and utterly distasteful to the people. For many years the Moderate majority had made no effort to mitigate or abolish the evil. Indeed, they rather rejoiced to have it so, for it was through the working of this very law that most of them had obtained their positions.

The only thorough cure was to appeal to Parliament, and get the unjust law of patronage repealed. Those who know anything of the difficulty of interfering with "vested rights" know something of the opposition and delay that might be looked for before anything could be gained in that quarter. How many years or decades of years would pass before the conscience of the British Parliament would be moved? Who could tell?

Could anything be done in the meantime in the way of mitigating the evil? They could not, till the law was changed, interfere with the right of the patron to choose and present the minister. But they could empower the Christian people, by a sufficient majority, to decline the minister presented, leaving it still to the patron to choose another.

A law putting this power into the hands of the Christian people was passed by the General Assembly of 1834. It was called the Veto Act, because though it could not give the people the power of choice in the matter of their minister, it gave them, in certain circumstances, the power to veto the choice of the patron.

Professor Gregg gives the following account of the noted case of Auchterarder:

"A few months after the passage of the Veto Act, the parish of Auchterarder became vacant, and the Earl of Kinnoul, who was the patron of the parish, nominated Mr. Young to the charge. A call to Mr. Young was prepared to be signed by the parishioners, but only three persons, one of whom was the patron's factor, and a non-resident, signed it. On the other hand, out of

350 male heads of families who were members of the congregation, 287 appeared before the Presbytery and recorded their opposition to the settlement of Mr. Young. The Presbytery refused to sustain the call, and their refusal was sustained by the superior courts, the Synod and the General Assembly. Regarding themselves as robbed of their rights, the patron and his nominee appealed to the judges of the Court of Session, who by a majority of eight to five, decided that the Presbytery had acted in violation of the law of the land, and particularly of the act of 1712."

Mr. Young now demanded that the Presbytery should proceed to settle him as minister over the people that had so unanimously declined his services. The case came before the Assembly, which decided that, though the civil courts had a right to deal with the stipend and church property as they might deem fit, they had neither right nor power to require the Church to settle an unsuitable minister over an unwilling people. Let them give Mr. Young the salary and manse if they chose. He could not occupy the pulpit or take the position of minister of the parish. They also empowered the Presbytery to appeal from the Court of Session to the House of Lords. But their appeal was dismissed by the House of Lords, and the finding of the Court of Session was declared to be law. Mr. Young now enjoyed the stipend, but he was not content. He claimed that he must be settled over the parish as its minister. This the Presbytery refused to do, and the case was again carried before the Court of Session. That court again decided against the Church, and required the Presbytery to proceed at once with the settlement of Mr. Young, prohibiting at the same time the placing of any other minister over the parish, even though he should be sustained by the voluntary offerings of the people.

Thus the old Church of Scotland, awakened from her long lethargy, "putting on her strength, shaking herself from the dust," and going to do her King's work in the King's name, was met by the Court of Session and told she was to do exactly what as the handmaid of

Christ she knew she ought not to do, and forbidden to do the very thing her real King required her to do. It was the old issue up again, who is the head of the Church of Scotland?

Case after case arose all through those years of conflict, and the eyes of the civilized world looked on with the deepest interest.

Mr. McKenzie, of Embro, sympathized intensely with the Church in her determination, in matters spiritual, to acknowledge no authority but that of Christ himself. And the young school teacher who watched with him for all the most recent news from the battlefield did so with the soul of a soldier. Every beat of his enthusiastic young heart responded to the old Scotch battle-cry, *The Crown Rights of Our Redeemer.*

Then came the final action of the House of Lords in rejecting the Claim of Rights. This rejection left nothing to the contending ministers but either meekly to obey the civil ruler to the neglect of the rights of Christ, or still to hold up the rights of Christ and step out of the Established Church.

The answer of the Government was received in January, 1843. The Assembly met on the 18th of May. What would be the result then? How many of the ministers would prove true to their principles? How many of them, for conscience sake, would leave the Establishment—churches and manses, and stipends and all—that they might be free to obey Christ, and Christ *alone*, in all matters spiritual?

"I venture to assert, from pretty accurate information," said Dr. Cumming, of London, "that less than one hundred will cover the whole secession. . . . *But I am not satisfied that any will secede.*"

"Mark my words," wrote one of the best-informed and most sagacious citizens of Edinburgh, "mark my words, not forty of them will go out."

The young school teacher in Canada was watching, with breathless interest, an exhibition of faithfulness sufficient to convince the world that Jesus Christ is still Head of the true Church of Scotland. Judging by

his habits in later life, we may well imagine the voice of that young Highlander sounding up to Heaven during those weeks of suspense, seeking "grace sufficient" for the brothers so put to the test.

* "The day of trial at last arrived. . . . So early in the morning as between four and five o'clock the doors of the church in which the Assembly was to convene opened to admit those who hastened to take up the most favorable positions, in which they were content to remain for nine weary hours.

"Then the hour of trial came. After the solemn opening prayer, Dr. Welsh, the retiring Moderator, rose and read a Protest, closing with the words: 'This our enforced separation from an Establishment which we loved and prized, through interference with conscience, the dishonor done to Christ's Crown, and the rejection of His sole and supreme authority as King in His Church.' Having finished the reading of this Protest, Dr. Welsh laid it upon the table, turned and bowed respectfully to the Commissioner, left the chair, and proceeded along the aisle to the door of the church. Dr. Chalmers had been standing immediately on his left. He looked vacant and abstracted while the Protest was being read; but Dr. Welsh's movement awakened him from his reverie. Seizing eagerly upon his hat, he hurried after him with all the air of one impatient to be gone. Mr. Campbell (of Menzie), Dr. Gordon, Dr. Macdonald and Dr. Macfarlane followed him. The effect upon the audience was overwhelming. At first a cheer burst from the galleries, but it was almost instantly and spontaneously restrained. It was felt by all to be an expression of feeling unsuited to the occasion; it was checked, in many cases, by an emotion too deep for any other utterance than the fall of sad and silent tears. The whole audience was now standing, gazing in stillness upon the scene. Man after man, row after row, moved on along the aisle, till the benches on the left, usually so crowded, showed scarce an occupant.

* Memoirs of Thos. Chalmers, Vol. IV., page 332.

More than 400 ministers, and a still larger number of elders, had withdrawn." And so the Free Church was born.

When the news of the Disruption had come to Canadian shores by the slow progress of the sailing vessel, the meeting of Synod, which was to take place in July, was close at hand. That Synod, with the news of the noble conduct of the Free Church brethren warm in their hearts, sent them stirring resolutions of sympathy and approval. This they had done throughout the struggle, encouraging the Church to maintain the conflict.

Was there any need for a Disruption in Canada? None took place in Nova Scotia? How did they avoid it?

The designation of the Synod there was: The Synod of Nova Scotia, *in connexion with the Church of Scotland.* At its meeting in 1844 it resolved almost unanimously to drop the clause, *in connexion with the Church of Scotland*, and the connexion which it declared, and to substitute another, so that the name should read, The Synod of Nova Scotia, *adhering to the Westminster Standards.* In this way the Synod of Nova Scotia stood distinctly on its own feet, and the controversy scarcely touched them.

The circumstances of the Canadian Church were essentially the same, and could have been met in the same way. The Evangelical party, at the meeting of Synod in 1844, were urgently desirous that this course should be pursued. But the majority refused to do so. The very body that, during the struggle, had repeatedly encouraged the Evangelical party in Scotland to maintain the conflict at all costs, decided by a majority of fifty-six to forty to keep connexion with what was left of the Church of Scotland, and to retain the clause in its name which declared that connexion.

Those in sympathy with the Free Church felt that, in retaining that name and the connexion it declared, they were sanctioning the action of the Church of Scotland, refusing to lift a clear testimony as to the Head-

ship of Christ over the Church, and virtually receding from the solemn declaration already given of attachment to the great principle for which the Free Church party had been contending.

On the 10th of July, the day after the vote was taken, the minority entered their Dissent to the action of the Synod and withdrew to a separate building, to constitute themselves into the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, commonly spoken of as the Free Church of Canada.

It looks easy on paper; but the Disruption in Canada, as to self-denial, meant much the same as it did in Scotland. The ministers who, for conscience sake, signed that Dissent and withdrew from the Synod in connexion with the Church of Scotland, knew that they thereby risked their churches, manses and salaries. Some of them were required, in very grievous circumtances, to yield all up, though some (Mr. McKenzie was one), from the unanimous adherence of their congregations, were spared that trial. But their new college, in whose behalf some of these men had labored hard and denied themselves much, had to be left behind. And all interest in Government endowments were lost.

But they gained more than they lost. They gained the right to put in the forefront of their testimony the glorious fact of the Headship of Christ over His own Church. Alongside of that, in shining letters, they put a testimony to the twin truth, the Headship of our Lord Jesus Christ over the nations, for they would have it distinctly understood that, though looking now for support to the voluntary offerings of the people, they were not, on that account, going to leap downwards into Voluntaryism. And thus, poor in this world's goods, but glorying in their King, they set their faces to their work. And did not the King smile upon them and bless them, and signally use them? For many years there were tokens of His prospering hand, that made glad the hearts of those who had borne loss for His sake.

Was it without a providential purpose that God

caused thus a lesson on the Headship of Christ to be written deep in the early history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada? There is an impression abroad that the whole matter is a "dead issue" now; but the historian of the struggles culminating in the Millennial victory may take a different view.

These were formative facts in connexion with John Ross's character and history. Without a knowledge of them neither character nor history could be intelligently surveyed.

CHAPTER IV.

A STUDENT AND STUDENT MISSIONARY.

THE newly-formed Synod of the (Free) Presbyterian Church in Canada acted with great unanimity and decision. Though they left behind them, in many cases, churches, manses, and salaries, they carried with them a large proportion of the people, and the enthusiasm of a victorious army was throughout their ranks. With finances, church-building and reörganizing all on their hands, they did not forget that vital matter if their cause was to grow, *a college.* From July to November was a short time in which to organize and equip a theological seminary, but zeal never says "I can't," and the 5th of November, 1844, saw the college hall opened.

"The place of meeting was a room in the house of Professor Esson, James Street, Toronto. Its furniture is described as consisting of a long deal table, two wooden benches, a few chairs and a range of shelves containing Mr. Esson's library and some books kindly lent by clergymen and other friends for the use of the students."

There were fourteen young men in attendance the first session, several of whom entered college then for the first time, but a large proportion were from Queen's. Though the old church party held the college building and equipments, it could not hold the students. Nearly all the members of their theological classes cast in their lot with the Free Church, and presented themselves at the opening of the modest new college on James Street.

The young Zorra school teacher did not begin his college course till the next year, 1845. As the group of

new students, on the day of the re-opening, came forward to enter their names on the college register, that of John Black, afterwards so well known in connection with Kildonan, Manitoba, was given in first and that of John Ross came second.

The impression Mr. Ross made on others during his college life is beautifully put by Professor McLaren:—

"The present writer entered college two years later, and well remembers the powerful impression made by Mr. Ross's strong personality upon his fellow-students. He did not parade his religion. He spoke comparatively little of his religious feelings and experiences, but no one could come into close contact with him without learning something of his deep spirituality and profound earnestness. He was very natural and unconventional in his style of dealing with religious matters. His religion was not a garment put on, but a life which manifested itself, and his character was so transparent and the currents of his religious nature so strong, that the spirit which reigned in him was visible to all around him."

Another friend writes of the same period:

"I first became acquainted with Mr. Ross at Knox College in the autumn of 1845.

"He was at once marked as a man of no ordinary character. His favorite theologian was Jonathan Edwards, and he seemed to revel in the deep and often awful mysteries which Edwards, above all men of modern times, seemed to have the power to unfold.

"Trained in the school of Zorra, he early imbibed the deep piety of Rosshire and Sutherlandshire, one point of which was that young people should not at an age so common at the present time, approach the communion table. In consequence, though he was regarded in Zorra as a young man of deep piety, he did not unite in the communion of the church till he came to college, when he united at the same communion with myself, under Dr. Burns. I happened to be in the room with some others when Dr. Burns and Mr. Ross were conversing upon the subject of membership, and I shall

never forget what took place at that time, or how Dr. Burns was impressed with the knowledge and deep spiritual experience of the young man who yet had great difficulty in overcoming his deep-rooted impression of the awful sacredness of the communion.

"When at college he was quite an explorer in the dark places of Toronto, and a frequent visitor at the hospitals. He took special pleasure when he could use the Gaelic, which was, he always contended, next to the Hebrew, the most powerful language for religious work.

"One day he came back from the hospital in great glee. He had found a patient by the name of John Shaw, whom I afterwards knew better as a member of my own congregation. John was deeply concerned for his soul. He had the worst English I ever knew, but revelled in the Gaelic.

"The first time Mr. Ross met him was by accident. He had been visiting the hospital, and an attendant told him that there was one man there whom nobody could understand. Mr. Ross settled the difficulty : the unknown tongue was the Gaelic. He spent a long time with Shaw, and told me on his return how delighted the poor man was to meet with one who could speak to him 'in the original.' After that Shaw did not want a counsellor and friend."

Another dear friend and fellow-student writes :—

"I cannot say that in college we were intimate chums ; he was a senior while I was a junior. I felt he was my superior in every sense, and felt such,—I was going to say, respect for him, but 'respect' is not sufficiently strong to express my feelings toward him. I revered him, and my reverence was so deep as to make me very backward in approaching him. But in the providence of God, when we became co-presbyters, and workers together in our pastoral and mission fields, my backwardness disappeared, for his warm heart and sterling principles and character drew me very near to him."

"When I entered college," said another college mate, "Mr. Ross was one of the senior students, and on

that account, as well as on account of his quickly estimated character, was at once regarded with profound respect. A few days afterwards I met him at a corner of a street. I instantly took off my hat, greeting him with much the same respect I would have paid to the Principal himself. His thoughtful countenance gave no sign of recognition, and he passed on a distance of some yards. Then he suddenly removed his hat with every mark of respect, turned and bowed, saying :—

"How do you do, Mr. McLaren ?"

Entirely engrossed in his own meditations, the greeting of his young fellow student, though distinctly apprehended by eyes and ears, failed to win the attention of the soul until several seconds had elapsed, and so its recognition was ludicrously tardy.

The power of mental concentration, which is one secret of pre-eminent success, was developed in Mr. Ross to a very high degree. Consequently difficulties were a delight to him. If his mind took hold of a perplexity his whole nature bent itself with the intensest eagerness to compass and master it in every detail. It was no hardship to him to hold on. The hardship was to relax for a moment until the object sought was attained. As a student he yielded too much to this fascination of intellectual conquest, yielded to it to the disregard of ordinary and valuable rules. Midnight was nothing to him. Indeed, the hours when everybody else was asleep and all was quiet were by far the preferable hours of study for him. A consequence of this hurtful habit is chronicled by one who was well acquainted with him at this time :—

"When Mr. Ross was on hand for breakfast, we knew he had stayed up all night. When he did not stay up all night, he never was in time for breakfast. But at all times John Ross was sure to be in time for prayers."

"During his college course," writes Dr. McLaren again, "Mr. Ross took a very high place as a student. He was a thinker, but his thinking did not always run very closely in the lines of his class work, and he would

not have distinguished himself in cramming for a modern examination. Even in his ordinary class work he always took a good place ; but it was as a profound and original thinker, who had a peculiarly clear grasp of divine truth, that he became specially known both to professors and students. He was pre-eminently a theologian. Like many men of genius, he had not the habits of study which would have enabled him to do full justice to his powers ; but his strong personality impressed all who knew him with the conviction that he was no ordinary man."

"Mr. Ross's gifts were such," writes another friend, "that he could start to Toronto with little more money than would pay his fare and depend on prizes, etc., for the expenses of the college term."

He entered into his studies with all the enthusiasm of his earnest nature, and yet, as suggested above, it was quite as often the books in the library as the lectures of the professors which got the concentrated attention that cannot be given to two things at once. He regretted in after life that he had not more completely allowed his mental activities to be directed into the ordinary lines of college instruction. But his intellectual appetite was strong, and books—especially such as taxed and stimulated thought—were to him an intense delight.

The habit of diligently gathering intellectual stores from the book shelves was one that Principal Willis frequently and strongly urged upon his students to cultivate. It was a regret to him that some of the young men were very slack in following his advice in this direction. But between him and the Zorra student there were strong links of sympathy—this, one of the strongest. He knew Mr. Ross to be an earnest student in many lines outside the college course.

One day the dignified Principal looked into the library. He saw a young man up on the step-ladder, poring over a book, evidently too much interested to think of getting down and making himself comfortable. This little display of enthusiasm pleased him, but he

turned quietly and left the room, unwilling to disturb the reader.

Some hours later he came back. What was his interest to see the same student in the same position, still poring over the same book. His appreciation could not be restrained any longer. Addressing him by name, he spoke a few words of paternal commendation. John Ross, for it was he, began to back down the ladder with the book still open in his hand. When he reached the floor he turned without a word of response and presented the book, still open, to the eyes of the benignant Principal, who read with a somewhat peculiar change of countenance the title of the book—"*How to Choose a Wife!*"

There was strong sympathy between these two. To the last Mr. Ross cherished the memory of Principal Willis.

"Never," he said, "did schoolboy answer the dinner-bell with more alacrity than I did the bell that summoned me to Principal Willis' class."

A fellow-student came in one evening and asked leave to read over his class exercise. It was freely given. Mr. Ross was a keen critic. The faults of the composition were honestly laid bare, and the student went away saying, "I'll write it over again."

The next evening he came back with a fresh paper, or rather the old one remodelled and rewritten. But the critic went at it again, not savagely, but with painful frankness, and again the student left the room saying, a little more sorrowfully this time, "I think I'll write it over again."

Soon he came back once more; but, as he entered the room, he announced in an energetic tone: "But, remember, I am *not* going to write it over again." The hitherto merciless critic, feeling that to find fault now would be to do harm, allowed the production to pass without further adverse criticism.

And this to the last was his manner of doing his own literary work. A paper for the public prints or an important letter would be written over and over again.

All the spare time for weeks has been taken up with the writing of a single letter, and a pile of rejected copies, inches high, would gather up at the side of the desk before one that quite expressed his ideas was produced.

Deeply Mr. Ross enjoyed the college training throughout its whole course. But He who leaves it to no mere college to equip His chosen ministers was sending another powerful spiritual teacher to give him some of the higher drill for the spiritual warfare.

In August, 1844, W. C. Burns, a young minister who had already been signally used of God in the revivals preceding the Disruption in Scotland, took passage in the good ship *Mary* for Montreal. He embarked for Canada in answer to urgent invitations from the Christian people on this side the water.

It was September, 1845, before Mr. Burns made his way to Toronto. His uncle, Dr. Burns of Knox College, made an appointment for him to preach on the very day of his arrival at a place near the city bearing the memorable name of Hog's Hollow. Though he arrived on the day on which he was expected, he was not early enough to meet the appointment made for him, and a young minister, Mr. Wallace, kindly consented to take the service.

Two of the students—Mr. John Black, afterwards of Kildonan, and Mr. John Scott, afterwards of London—went to meet him on his arrival and conduct him to the college. He was introduced to the assembled students. His grave and serious deportment impressed some of the young men deeply. He told them he had no special message for them, and therefore would give no address; but, if they wished, he would read to them a passage from the Word of God.

Mr. Ross afterwards spoke of that first meeting with Mr. Burns as a peculiar experience. "I have heard him speak many times," he said, "sometimes very powerfully and sometimes not so, but I never got so much from him as when he simply read the Word of God. The truths he had himself been taught by the Spirit of God shone out of the words as he read them, more clearly to me than when he tried to expound them."

While reading the passage of Scripture chosen, his tongue was loosed to speak freely and most impressively on several of the points in it. The service produced a deep impression among the young men.

In the evening Mr. Wallace, who had previously taken his appointment at Hog's Hollow, reported himself to welcome the young Scotchman. As the two clasped hands, Mr. Burns said :

"Brother, you have been preaching for me. Let us now kneel down together and ask God's blessing upon the message you delivered."

There was a fascination to Mr. Ross about the deeply spiritual services and conversation of William Burns. He was much in the evangelist's company, and watched to be present whenever possible, at any meeting where he was expected. The friendship between them was not unlike that between John Knox and the gracious Wishart, and ready indeed would the young Highlander have been to have carried the sword in his friend's defence, if that had been needful. He spent several months in Montreal while Burns was working in and about the city, constantly frequenting his services ; and more than once he stood at his side while stones and mud were madly hurled at them both. On one occasion Burns had been cut over the eye by a too well-directed missile. Mr. Ross called the next day to see him. The evangelist made light of the circumstance, saying :

"The *one* important thing is that we go out *in the name of the Lord.*"

"As he spoke the words," Mr. Ross said, years afterwards, as he narrated the incident, "I saw as I had never seen before the mighty significance of the expression, to go out '*in the name of the Lord.*' "

"And as Mr. Ross was speaking the words," said the friend who reported the above, "I saw as I had never seen before the power of the expression. It was just at the time of Lord Napier's being sent out to Abyssinia to demand the prisoners *in the name of the Queen.* That incident flashed in along with the words Mr. Ross had spoken, and I saw that, as the whole

power of the British Empire was at the back of the man who went out in the name of the Queen, even so the whole omnipotence of the Godhead is at the back of the man who goes out in the name of the Lord."

The same thought thus caught from the Spirit-taught lips of the wounded evangelist, appeared at a somewhat different angle on another occasion.

A brother minister was giving to Mr. Ross his outline for a proposed sermon on the subject of David's exultant run to meet Goliath. He announced as his third head, "The stripling's equipment for meeting the giant—five smooth stones and a sling—rather small —*but* he went out *in the name of the Lord.*"

"Yes," responded Mr. Ross, with a Celtic gesture of enthusiasm, "and that is a *weak* thing you strike *in the name of the Lord.*"

"I have never preached that sermon since," said the friend to whom these words were spoken, "without giving that masterly sentence from Mr. Ross. And remember," he added, "I gave the right man credit for it every time."

But it is not always easy to give the "right man credit." How much of the deeper spiritual insight which Mr. Ross enjoyed in handling the word of God, was owing to hallowed intercourse with this young Scotchman who walked so very near his Master, who may tell? This much is clear. He had an honorable share in fitting the young Canadian student for the work the Master had for him to do.

In these early days, as now, the summer months of the students, between the College sessions, were utilized among the mission fields.

Though Mr. Ross was nearly twenty-four years of age when he entered College, his face and figure, from his student habits and his extremely fair complexion, retained the youthful, almost boyish appearance.

Very early in his College course he was sent for the summer to a mission field where the Gaelic was in great demand. One prayer meeting held among these people yields our first glimpse of him as a missionary.

The subject chosen for the Scripture lesson was the close of the Sermon on the Mount, especially the verses about the man who built the house upon the sand. In preparing for the service the young missionary laid his text before him, and thought out his address on this line. "What are the sandy foundations on which *I* am most tempted to build?" He knew that, "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man," and concluded that if, in the light of his own temptations, he should open up the passage, he would not be drawing the bow at a venture, but would, in all probability, be making straight for the joints and marrow of the souls that were to gather before him.

There was a good meeting, and amongst the rest, there came a rather conspicuous figure, an old elder whose name was John. Though scarcely yet acquainted with this old man, Mr. Ross had heard of him as one whose temper was touchy, and who needed to be dealt with judiciously

The address was given along the lines of preparation. The young preacher felt that John paid critical attention. He did not gather whether the impression made was favorable or otherwise, but, according to his pre-arranged plan, for he was anxious to do whatever could be properly done to lead the old man to a kindly disposition towards himself, he asked at the close of the address—

"Will Mr. John ———, please lead us in prayer?"

He was not prepared for the tirade that followed. John rose, but it was something like a scold that was poured out in the shape of a prayer. The old Highlander had taken the searching exposition of the young preacher as a succession of barbed arrows directed wittingly against himself. He seemed to have imagined that the occasion of that discourse was information received of his own peculiar infirmities, and, though he did not disclaim them, and was willing, on the whole, to take a humble place before God on account of them, he felt it hard to be thus publicly rebuked by so young a man.

"And how is this thus?" he began, addressing the Almighty, "that aged Eli is again rebuked by whey-faced Samuel?"

This original word-painting of his own youthful appearance helped to secure for the scene and all its details a permanent place in the missionary's memory.

During the summer of 1848 or 1849 Mr. Ross did missionary work in and around Bradford. The impression left upon some of his hearers there has proved deep and strong. The writer lately had the pleasure of spending an evening with one of them, an old man of over eighty-five years of age. It was delightful to see how the enthusiasm of youth would return as he told of this prayer meeting and that Sabbath service. One peculiarity of these recollections struck me as he talked. Though few of the remarks of the preacher had been preserved in memory, in every case the *text* stood out distinctly. The power of the sermon was seen, not in that it lived itself, but in that it had been made effectual to the indelible writing of the text in the heart and mind of the hearers.

He recalled also a prayer-meeting in which the close of the eighth chapter of Proverbs was the passage expounded. The young preacher explained that the Christ of the New Testament is the Wisdom of Proverbs. In passing from verse to verse he showed that it is Jesus Himself who is the speaker, asserting His fellowship with Jehovah, and Sonship as well. But the word which lingered most lovingly with the white-haired pilgrim who was recalling these things was this sentence: "My delights were with the sons of men."

"I cannot tell you now what he said, but that word he opened up to us, and it was good."

"There were a few good men amongst us in those days," he went on, "and they all set much store by Mr. Ross."

Then, as though accounting for this unanimous partiality on the part of those "good men," he quoted this verse with accompanying anecdote:

"'Of aloes, myrrh and cassia
A smell thy garments had.'

"'Do you think,' said one of our old worthies, 'that the child of God has no nose that he should not be able to smell the savor of the Lord's garments upon those who are much in His company?'"

Then he went on to tell of another prayer meeting in which the first chapter of I. John was commented on.

"You should have heard him," he said, "opening up that word, 'That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of Life—that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.'"

The following are some striking utterances, most of which were communicated in writing:

To those who kick against God's rule, and want to manage themselves and the world according to their own ideas, he said:

"You would wrest the sceptre out of your Maker's hands. But you would not hold the reins long till you would be glad to restore them."

A friend told him on one occasion: "Some of the Bradford people were angry at what you said to-day."

"I am glad to see them get angry," he answered. "It is the non-caring Gallioes that are the more hopeless cases."

While urging sinners by the terrors and doom of the Day of Judgment to seek refuge now in a crucified Saviour, he said:

"God is awful in His mercy, out of His treasury sending thunder and lightning to do us good. What will He be in His *wrath!*"

"I had asked a neighbor," explained my informant, "if it is in a sinner's own power to believe. 'Can you pluck the sun down to earth?' was his answer. One day I told Mr. Ross the answer I had received, and asked him if it conveyed the truth. He replied in this way: 'To such an inquiry I would say, The sin of unbelief is an inexcusable sin, for it makes God out to be a liar, and then it is the prolific mother of all other sins. Still the gift of faith is by, to, through and for

Jesus. Then, upward look, however distressed at your own unbelief. 'Look unto me,' the Lord has said, 'and *be ye saved.*'"

"As I wrote these words to you," said the aged Christian who had penned them, "the truth of them shined in upon me as it never did before—that I am just to *look* to Jesus *for faith* and *everything else*, and that *Jesus will do the whole!*"

The time came, in the spring of 1850, when the last college exercise was written and the last examination passed. The student, as a student, stepped for the last time out of the college building, ready now to go out among the people and "tell them all the words of this life." He afterwards described his sensations in one short sentence:

"Then," he said, "I danced a jig on the college green, for now I could be off to my work."

The church at that time required of her young ministers that one year at least must be given to the mission fields before settling over any congregation. This was the work above all others that Mr. Ross loved best. He had hitherto enjoyed refreshing tastes of it between the college sessions; but now, without hindrance or delay, he could give himself wholly to it.

CHAPTER V.

BRUCEFIELD.

few years ago a burly farmer was standing on the platform of a railway car as the train was steaming slowly out of Brucefield station. The conductor eyed him good naturedly, as he was evidently looking for something.

"Where is the town?" inquired the good farmer, still searching across the country for something he could not find.

"Humph! there is no town," replied the conductor, "but that's Brucefield," pointing with his thumb over his shoulder, "You can see it now we're past the station."

"You don't say! I've heard so much about Brucefield I thought it was something to look at," replied the farmer in a disappointed tone, and retreated to his seat.

Brucefield is a quiet, tidy little place, clustering about the crossing of two main thoroughfares, the London Road and the Bayfield Road. Its chief importance is that it is the centre of a thriving, energetic settlement in one of Canada's choicest agricultural sections. Because of its central position in the county and the excellent roads leading up to it, it has enjoyed a celebrity out of proportion with its size from the holding there of important county meetings, and also the great annual county show of stock and implements.

But Brucefield's real title to consideration lies in the class of people settled in and around it. A few choice families represented England and the north of Ireland. There were also a good many Lowland Scotch of the best type, but the larger proportion were godly Highlanders, some of whom in the first instance had no

English whatever, and many others felt to the end that English was a foreign tongue. Altogether they were a God-fearing community who, in those early days of straitness and difficulty, "forsook not the assembling of themselves together." It was a touching exhibition of faithfulness in this respect when Gaelic-speaking men and women attended seriously the preaching of the Word of God in a language they could not understand, and attempted to join in singing the praises of the God they loved in words that conveyed no meaning to their ears. One good woman, recently out from the Highlands, said to her husband on their way home from the English service, while the tears were running down her cheeks :—

"And am I never more to hear the Word of God preached in my own tongue?" The question went to his heart, and the result was that, though they had already taken up land, they threw up their claim and moved to another district, where they were within reach of Gaelic preaching.

Rev. Wm. Graham, a missionary recently out from Scotland, was the first Free Church minister under whom the Brucefield people were gathered as a congregation. He had accepted a call from the congregation of Egmondville, a village about six miles further east, and Brucefield was added to his charge as a station. This arrangement was very satisfactory, for the Brucefield people did not yet feel able to maintain a minister by themselves, and they were much pleased at securing the regular services of a man of God and an excellent preacher. Though he had not the Gaelic, and that was a great sorrow to some, yet Gaelic preaching was something they scarcely dared look for, especially in those days when the harvest was so great and the laborers of any description were so very few.

But soon the Egmondville people became anxious to have the whole time of their minister for themselves, and steps were taken to carry this wish into effect. The people of Brucefield were at first deeply disappointed at losing a minister whose services they had highly prized.

But they did not yield to discouragement. There was enterprise amongst them, and it was not long until they were taking energetic measures to secure a minister for themselves.

As there were so many Gaelic-speaking people amongst them, they were particularly anxious for one who could preach in that language as well as in English. Mr. McKenzie of Embro, moderator of Presbytery at the time, was communicated with on the subject, but his answer was that the demand for such services was so great, and those who could render them were so few, that he could not encourage them to hope for success in that matter.

About a mile north of Brucefield, on the only hill for miles along the London road, there had settled a godly and energetic Highlander, Mr. Neil Ross. He was personally acquainted with Mr. Lachlan McPherson, now a Free Church minister settled in the township of Williams not far from London.

In the early autumn of 1850 Mr. Neil Ross was down at London on business. While there he heard that the communion was to be dispensed at Lobo, only a few miles from the church where Mr. McPherson preached. He decided to wait and attend the services.

He drove over early and had a little conversation with his friend before the service commenced. To the genuine Highlander's question as to what Gaelic ministers were expected to take part, Mr. McPherson replied,—

"There is a young man with us, one John Ross. He is a gifted man, the son of his grandfather, George McKay, of Embro, Duine Righ-lochan."

The stranger took his seat in the church. He watched with keen interest for a first glimpse of the young Gaelic minister, whose name he had just heard for the first time. In a few minutes a rather tall, fair, youthful-looking man entered and passed up into the pulpit. He conducted the opening services with unusual seriousness, and then gave out his text, Isaiah LIII. 12, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide his spoil with the strong: because

he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

The stranger listened with the intensest interest. He marked the text.

"Well, young man," he said within himself, "if you can handle that text, you'll do."

But he did handle the text, and the listener's heart was drawn with a love and appreciation that waxed ever warmer as the years swept by to the young man who could so speak of Jesus Christ.

As he was moving slowly out of the church, he heard Mr. McPherson's voice in conversation with another voice he at once recognized as that of the young minister :—

"How do you expect to get to Kincardine?"

"I can walk if there is no other way," was the reply, "only it will take a good deal of time."

"There is a man here to-day down from the Huron tract," Mr. McPherson said, "I know you can get up with him if you wish, and that would take you more than half way."

Mr. Neil Ross now turned around and addressed Mr. McPherson, and those who understand his generous nature will know with what heart the words were spoken.

"I will drive Mr. Ross as far as my place and farther, if he will ride with me."

During the long drive which followed a personal friendship was begun which never knew a break, not even a ruffle.

The Brucefield people at once acted with energy. Mr. McKenzie was again communicated with, and, overriding difficulties that stood in the way, they succeeded in securing two precious Sabbaths from the young Gaelic preacher as he was passing southward, after fulfilling his Kincardine appointment. In the spring of the next year, 1851, they again secured his services for six weeks, and at the end of that time they were ready to extend a "call."

Mr. Allan of North Easthope moderated in the "call," —Mr. Allan, the young Scotch minister whose arrows in years gone by had kept the Zorra boy awake at night—of whom that same boy had thought, "I would as soon shake hands with the lightning." Many a hearty handshake was between them in subsequent years, with all the real brotherliness that a handshake is meant to imply.

Mr. George Walker, one of Brucefield's elders, was appointed to carry the call to London and lay it before the Presbytery. When he had done so he found, with some anxiety, that another call, one from Aldboro', was before that body as well as the one from Brucefield.

It cost Mr. Ross anxious thought and prayer before he could make sure which was the call he was to follow. There were strong reasons in favor of each, and some specially weighty ones that told in favor of Aldboro'. The thought that finally overbalanced all opposing reasons and brought him to decision was this :

"Brucefield will be an open door to the mission fields in the north."

So Mr. Walker carried home the glad news that their minister was to be set over the congregation in a few weeks—on the 25th of the September following. Those who know anything about the deep delight of godly Highlanders in the preaching of God's Word in their own tongue can have some measure of sympathy with the joy and expectancy of the Brucefield people. The day of the ordination and induction was a point of eager anticipation. None were more glad and humbly grateful than Mr. and Mrs. Neil Ross up on the hill.

But a sorrowful surprise awaited the good couple. Shortly before the day appointed Mr. Neil Ross received an official summons from Goderich to report himself at the Court House on the morning of the 25th of September, that he might act on the jury required on that day.

Here was a dilemma for a Highlander. He could not be at Goderich and Brucefield both at the same time. The law imperatively required his prompt appearance at Goderich. His whole man—spiritual, national, social —clamored to be at Brucefield. What could be done !

He went up to Goderich the day before, and sought an interview with the sheriff. This considerate officer did not make light of the case. He thought over it a little.

"No doubt," he said, "you would like to be at the ordination of your minister. Wait till the Court opens to-morrow morning. If the jury is pretty numerous, you might take your chance and slip. It might be all right."

This he did, and to his great satisfaction he found that the jury was full without him. He "slipped," according to the suggestion of the considerate sheriff, and hastened over the twenty miles between Goderich and Brucefield, to attend the ordination and induction of their young Gaelic minister, John Ross.

Mr. McKenzie, of Embro, was present and preached the sermon on the text, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God." And then was formed the bond between pastor and people which must have been first formed and registered in heaven, for it stood tests which would surely have broken any links of mere earthly origin. For thirty-five years the young man who entered that day into a covenant of the Lord with his flock was known wherever he went as John Ross of Brucefield, and as John Ross of Brucefield he finally laid down his armor and passed out of sight.

Mr. Ross's views and feelings concerning this very peculiar bond were entirely different from those that usually find expression in these days. The overruling consideration that determined which "call" to accept was not the amount of salary nor the smallness of the labor involved; it was the opportunity one field offered for more abundant and arduous labors.

When, the spring following his ordination, his beloved young wife "fell asleep," and friends were very anxious to remove the body to the family burying-place in Zorra. Some of his Brucefield people came to ask his wishes in the matter. His answer was:

"I have come to live among you, and I intend to

die among you. That body must lie *here*." It was accordingly buried in the middle of the little churchyard which lay a few yards from the manse door.

When, twenty years later, he received a most urgent "call" from the historic congregation of Indian Lands, Glengarry, he was for a while a great deal perplexed as to the path of duty. Some special features of the case made him question for a time if it might not, after all, be a call from the Master. It was not for long, however. He positively declined to go, saying to a friend, as he told of his decision, "It seems to me I love the sinners about Brucefield better than the saints anywhere else." They were not a particularly amiable class of sinners either that drew his heart so strongly at the time. The special individuals present in his mind were a number of godless lads that for a while seemed to have agreed together to annoy him in small ways. Some of these very young men, a few years later, watched with grateful eagerness on a dying bed for the visits of the Man with the Book.

The love he cherished for his people was most beautifully reciprocated by them. In ways so many and so unusual that only genuine love could have devised them, they testified that love throughout the thirty-five years that he was with them; and through the ten years that have passed since, it has blossomed perhaps even more freely than before. One thing he was particularly grateful for, they never hindered him in the missionary work upon which his heart was set. If supply for his pulpit could be obtained, it was obtained; but if not, his elders were always ready and willing to conduct a prayer meeting in his absence.

"One blessing," Mr. Ross said, near the close of his life, "one blessing God has given me ever since I came to Brucefield, and for which I cannot thank him too much, is a harmonious and helpful eldership. When I see the trouble some of our best ministers have from that quarter, I cannot but rejoice in this peculiar blessing."

It was not an ordinary band of elders that gathered around the young minister of Brucefield. At the beginning there were five.

Mr. George Walker was a born leader of men, with a large heart, a clear understanding, a singularly correct judgment, and most felicitous powers of expression. A more powerful ally could hardly be imagined, and all his powers and all his resources were ever held ready when his minister needed either them or him. Many a time Mr. Ross thanked God from the bottom of his heart for Mr. Walker's ready and efficient friendship.

Mr. Hugh Mustard was one of "The Men" of the Highlands, and a rare specimen of the same. During Disruption days in Scotland, when Free Church ministers were not always within reach, the people did not go away without spiritual bread if he opened to them the Word of God.

It was said of him by one who knew him well in Canada, "You cannot be long in Hugh Mustard's company till the conversation will turn to things of Christ."

His short and simple counsel to one who told him of the temptations of the great adversary, was given in these words, "Meet him with Christ."

Toward the close of his life he had been sitting quietly thinking one evening. Suddenly he rose full of a thought. "Christ does the whole," he said with emphasis, "and yet, blessed be His name, He speaks as though we did it."

When, in the quiet of the Communion Sabbath morning, this spiritual Christian opened the book and spoke briefly on some passage to the waiting people, they were words of weight that fell from his lips. Upon one such occasion he gave them one of Christ's parting promises, spoken on that memorable night of the first communion. "I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice." He gave it as a word of cheer to those whose hearts were out after their absent Lord, and as a word of searching to those who "love not our Lord Jesus Christ."

It may easily be understood that such an elder was a continual blessing.

Mr. Robert Carnochan was the sweet singer of the congregation. His voice was singularly rich and clear,

with a spiritual ring in it that could not be mistaken. He always knew how to adapt tunes to words, and sang with a sweetness and solemnity that could be felt, and yet with a power that easily carried the whole congregation. His very countenance, and tall, dignified figure, were an influence for good, for he evidently completely forgot himself, and his whole being was filled with the thought to which he was giving most musical utterance. As to personal character he was mild, judicious, firm and full of the sort of lovingkindness that is described in the 13th chapter of I. Corinthians.

"Why did you call your boy Robert?" I asked once of a father who had just given that name to his first-born son.

"I called him after Mr. Carnochan;" was the significant answer, "and I did it because I thought I could not name him after a better man."

Mr. Angus Gordon did not remain long with Brucefield, as a congregation was soon after formed in Clinton, where he lived. But he left a fragrant memory with the people among whom he had worshipped; and his benignant, serious countenance and helpful presence were much missed. Something of his gracious character can be seen to this day in the countenance and conduct of some of his great grandchildren, marking them out as different from their fellows.

Mr. John McQueen was the fifth. He was a worthy man, well known for his sterling qualities and steady friendships; but he died many years before Mr. Ross.

In later years Mr. George Forrest was added to the Brucefield eldership. He was a man of like character with the rest, always holding up his minister's hands and making the things of the Kingdom the first concern.

Each name on the list proved cause for an additional note in Mr. Ross's song of gratitude for "this peculiar blessing from God, a harmonious and helpful session."

The following extracts from one of Mr. Ross' note-books will let the reader into some of the secrets of this young minister's life, especially his conversational

method of studying the Scriptures and his own estimate of the work committed to his hands—of the power by which it was to be done and the spirit in which it must be prosecuted.

"Meeting this morning the two blind men who cried to him for light, I cried for light for myself, and was met by the words, 'And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I command you?' Another turn of the pages, and there was the story of blind Bartimeus, who asked that he might receive his sight. Again I asked light for myself, and then was met by the words, 'Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, etc., etc., to whom He will answer, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.'

"Let me, therefore, see that I attend to the words and do what He saith—read and preach what He bids me read and preach, go where He bids me go, shun what He bids me shun, put away what He bids me put away, and study what He bids me study."

The next entry is evidently a meditation on paper, meant for his own improvement, not an outline of the sermon.

"Peter and Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And He saith unto them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,' and they straightway left their net and followed Him." (Matthew IV.: 18-20.)

FISHERS OF MEN.

"Those who become in this sense 'fishers of men' are made such by Jesus Christ. But, 1st, He makes those who become 'fishers of men' first followers of Himself. 2nd, they become 'fishers of men' in answer to His own call. Without the direct work of Christ in Him to that end, no man in His sense of the words can become a 'fisher of men.' He must be made by Christ a follower of Himself, and he must be called by Christ himself to the work.

"It is Christ alone who can give him men to be caught, for none are caught or can be caught but those

whom He has redeemed by His blood, and whom He in due time calls by His gospel.

"It is Christ alone who can recover them out of another sort of net in which they are entangled, even the snare of the Devil, by whom they are taken captive at his will.

"Again it is Christ alone who can give the wisdom and skill necessary to be used with men in order that they may be caught.

"'Then opened He their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures.' This is necessary in order to be 'fishers of men.'

"The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, patient, in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves. This is also quite necessary in order to become a 'fisher of men.'

"The 'fisher of men' must be a man of faith—faith in the Word of God, that one jot or one tittle of it cannot pass away, and faith in the power of Christ such as the Centurion had when he said, 'Say in a word and my servant shall be healed.'

"He must exhibit the grace of the gospel and the mercy of God as illustrated in the parable of the prodigal son. There are loops in the gospel woven by the Holy Spirit on very purpose to catch sinners in, and let us take heed that we do not unravel them and spoil the net. A whole row of such loops is to be found in those Scriptures in which particular sinners, or sinners guilty of particular sins, are brought into immediate contact with Christ and His grace. Such a one is that in Romans XIII.: 13, 14, 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.' Here the man who is rioting and drunken is called upon to put on Christ, and put off these. 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.' These are loops in the Gospel net in which to catch drunkards even in their drunkenness.

"Seeing it is by the Gospel men are caught, the 'fisher of men' must in his own spirit exhibit the spirit of the Gospel, and he must know the Gospel and preach it in its simplicity and purity.

"Seeing it is the Holy Ghost who catcheth men by the Gospel, the 'fisher of men' must be full of the Holy Ghost, and be led by Him.

"Seeing the Cross of Christ is an offence to the carnal mind, the 'fisher of men' must see to it that he 'gives no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed.'"

There are hints in the above, especially for those who may be just putting their "hand to the plow," hints which, if laid to heart, will lead to much watching, much prayer, much of the humbleness to which God giveth grace, of the emptiness which affords room for God's fulness, and of the weakness in which God's strength is made perfect.

The next extract is an amplification of a sentence of Paul's, and is again meant probably for his own benefit as a minister of the Gospel rather than for that of any congregation.

"'I am sure that when I come unto you I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.'

"1st. He meant to come to them as a preacher and teacher of the Gospel of Christ, to make it known to them in its fulness. He was not going to them as a preacher and teacher of the law or of the legal dispensation, nor as a teacher of morality, nor as a lecturer on Grecian or Roman literature or philosophy, nor as a politician, nor in pursuit of any worldly business. As at Corinth, so in Rome, he determined 'not to know anything among them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.'

"2nd. Neither did he intend to teach and preach to them a mutilated Gospel—the Gospel stripped of anything that belongs to it, but the Gospel in its fulness; not something sound about the Gospel, but to preach the Gospel itself directly; not a Gospel text here and there opened up and taught, but the Gospel itself in its glorious fulness; facts and doctrines and fruits.

"3rd. The fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ. Not the Gospel as a theory, or as the principal part of theology, or as a matter of speculative know-

ledge; but the Gospel as that which carries in it to men a fulness of needed blessing. He was coming to them as a man entrusted with abundant supplies of provision for a famishing city, or of sure medicine for a plague-stricken district, or as bearing the King's pardon for a community of condemned men. The fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ comprehends a great deal. Who can set forth all that these words cover? Pardon, reconciliation, liberty, holiness: or, (as we have it in the Catechism) effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life accompany these, together with all that are matters of assured hope for the world to come. To come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ was not simply to come to speak to them of these blessings, but so to preach those blessings to them that they might possess them in their fulness, each one for himself, so to preach the Gospel to them that they might be blessed with the fulness of its blessings, 'to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.'

"4th. To come to them in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ was to come to them infallibly sure of the truth and certainty of the Gospel. His own knowledge of it and faith in it were of the most decisive character, and he preached it with no uncertain sound, not with vagueness and doubt, but as the Word of God, the Gospel of Christ, who is the Truth, the Way and the Life.

"5th. Sure also of the errand on which this Gospel is sent into the world, viz., to open the eyes of men, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in Christ. The errand of the Gospel is to convey to men all the blessings with which it is fraught.

"6th. Sure also that the Gospel must prosper in the thing whereto God has sent it. It is not to return to Him void. It must do its work. The power and faith-

fulness of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are pledged for its complete success, and for the final salvation of everyone who rests in it and its provisions."

The above have been copied from Mr. Ross's unstudied notebook, with scarcely even a verbal alteration. Had they been prepared for publication by the hand that penned them at first, they would have been written and rewritten until they exactly expressed the very shade of thought intended But it does not seem right for any other hand to attempt such revision.

CHAPTER VI.

THE UNION OF 1861.

THE early months of Mr. Ross's ministry in Brucefield were clouded by the shadow of death steadily darkening down upon his home. His sweet young wife, to whom he had been deeply attached almost from boyhood, died the February after his settlement, and left, as he said twenty years later, an "utter desolation" behind. His sister, Miss Jane Ross, came nobly to his help in these circumstances, and was a tower of strength to him for many years until her own health somewhat gave way.

His work during those early years in Brucefield was broken, according to his heart's desire, by frequent missionary tours in the Northern counties. It was also very constantly and pleasantly varied by faithful attendance at Church Courts. He enjoyed with no common zest intercourse with brother ministers, and taking his own share in the debates that then occupied their attention.

One special subject of debate all through those early years, from 1851 to 1861, and one in which Mr. Ross took a somewhat important part, was the proposed union between the (Free) Presbyterian Church in Canada and the United Presbyterian Church in Canada. Every year, as regularly as the Synod met, the subject occupied an important place in their deliberations. That the reader may be prepared to take an intelligent interest in the matter, it may be well to go back a little, and make plain the antecedents and character of the United Presbyterian Church with whom it was proposed to enter into union.

Those who read with interest the chapter on Church History, will remember that the Free Church was not the first secession from the Church of Scotland. The cluster of godly men rallying round Ebenezer Erskine in 1733 stood on exactly the same ground as the Free Church 110 years later. They, like their brethren of the later date, had contended earnestly within the Church for the rights of Jesus Christ and His people, until that Church could bear them no longer and thrust them out. Then they "strengthened their hands in God" and contended as earnestly outside of the Church for the self-same objects, finding themselves freed thenceforth from many of their former difficulties. During the dark century that followed, they were abundantly used and blessed of God in feeding His scattered sheep, many of whom had otherwise been left "fainting, and scattered abroad, sheep having no shepherd." Indefatigable laborers were these, under whatever name they wrought. First they were known as the Secession, later, as the Associate Synod; and later still, from the year 1847, as the United Presbyterian Church. Diligence and self-denial —lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes— characterized them wherever they went. These were not the men to leave the colonies without care. Early in the century missionaries were sent from this energetic body of Christians to minister to the emigrants then leaving the shores of the Old World in great numbers for the dark forest lands of Canada. In 1844, at the time of the Canadian Disruption, their Missionary Synod, as it was called, numbered twenty-two ministers, while the roll of the newly formed (Free) Presbyterian Synod contained the names of twenty-three.

Here then, after the Disruption, were two bodies of Presbyterians, alike in origin, alike in faith, alike in Church government, alike in everything (except *one* thing) —why should not these two unite and work together for their Lord, instead of forming all over the land rival camps?

Before that question could be decided, the nature and importance of the *one* thing on which they differed would need to be understood.

There was no difference between them regarding Christ's Headship over the Church. They enthusiastically agreed in honoring Jesus Christ as the sole Head of His Church, in condemning the civil ruler who, on any pretext whatever, interferes with the spiritual jurisdiction of Christ's Kingdom, and in as strongly condemning the church that shall, on any pretext whatever, allow such interference.

But the Free Church as enthusiastically held, with John Knox and his fellows, that Christ is also God's appointed Head over the nations, and that, consequently, the Christian ruler of a Christian nation owes it to Jesus Christ to use His power as a civil ruler in the interest of the Kingdom of Christ, as far as such exercise of His power can be of service to that cause. They believed that the serious word of counsel given at the close of the 2nd Psalm to the kings and judges of the earth is given to them *as kings*, not merely as individuals. They held that the duty there imperatively laid upon kings is, loyally to yield their *official power* to the King God has set over Zion. The practical issues of this view of the duties of the civil ruler bear especially in four directions: 1st. It lays a solemn duty upon nations and their rulers, publicly and nationally to do homage to God, and to Jesus Christ whom He hath appointed mediatorial King. This recognition should appear in the very constitution of the state, and manifest itself in the appointment and honorable observance of days of public, national thanksgiving or humiliation, according to God's providential dealings with the nation. 2nd. It justifies the state, in proper circumstances, in taking public funds for the maintenance of religion, and the Church in receiving such assistance, always providing that no infringement of spiritual privilege is made by the one or allowed by the other. 3rd. It lays it as a duty upon the Christian ruler of a Christian country to protect the Sabbath by law, and not to leave it to the slow growth of a Christian public opinion to establish a universal Sabbath rest. 4th. It requires the ruler, especially if he assumes the responsibility of general education, to see that Scripture

knowledge shall be given along with secular knowledge —teaching not dogma but *Scripture*—so that not one child educated in the Public Schools should fail of an adequate knowledge of God as communicated through Scripture narrative in Scripture words.

The United Presbyterian Church, not in the days of its founders, but especially since the dawning of the present century, have practically repudiated this doctrine of the Headship of Christ over the nations, and all its bearings upon the duties of the civil ruler. They proceed upon the principle that Jesus Christ claims no allegiance whatever from nations as nations, nor from the civil ruler as such. That, *as a man*, the magistrate is bound to serve the Lord, but, *as a ruler*, his whole duty consists in guarding the natural rights of his subjects, leaving it to the Church alone to advance Christ's cause throughout the nation and the world. They maintained: 1st. That national, constitutional recognition of God is out of place, and that the appointment by the Governor of days of thanksgiving or humiliation is an interference with the duty of the Church. 2nd. That it is always and necessarily wrong for the magistrate to endow or assist the Church, and equally wrong for the Church to accept such endowment or assistance, even though left free in matters spiritual. 3rd. That the Sabbath *as the Lord's Day* is no concern of the magistrate; but that *as a day of rest*, known to be beneficial to man, he may, if the majority desire it, protect it by law. 4th. That in no circumstances whatever has the civil ruler a right to do anything towards the religious instruction of the children of the land. That matter must be left entirely to the Church.

It will be seen that in this whole field of truth and duty, full of practical issues, the two churches were diametrically opposed.

Nevertheless, negotiations for union were entered into immediately. Though the differences stated above were felt on all sides to constitute a most serious difficulty in the way, yet they had so much in common, and the hurtful effects of continued separation were so mani-

fest and so serious, that there was a strong wish on both sides to come to an agreement.

Toward this end, in 1845, a union committee was appointed by each of the Synods. These committees met, year after year, each seeking: 1st. To modify the opinions of the other, that there might be a nearer approach to real unanimity on the subject of difference; and 2nd. (when that was found to be hopeless.) To construct such a document as a basis of union as would give adequate expression to the views of each and yet give no vital offence to either. The negotiations continued during sixteen years, and at length a basis of union was drawn up which, whether satisfactory or otherwise, was almost unanimously accepted by both churches.

For several years Mr. Ross was a member of the union committee appointed by the Synod of the Free Church. Throughout the negotiations he was anxious to advance the cause of union. Some of his warmest ministerial friends belonged to the United Presbyterian body, and very beautifully they dwelt together and worked together in unity. He deeply respected the founders of the Secession, and their century of heroic labor, whereby they had earned an honorable title long before the Free Church as a body had even buckled on its armor. He appreciated the character of the men occupying their pulpits, and of the people occupying their pews, and he was ready to do anything that rightly lay in his power to clear away the hindrances to union. But he was also deeply anxious to prevent any concession that would neutralize the ringing testimony given by the Free Church to the Headship of Christ over the nations.

But the fact of the matter was, as he saw very clearly later, that the securing of such a union apart from compromise somewhere, was an impossibility. The one party believed in special duties as owing by the civil ruler to Jesus Christ as mediatorial King. The other party frankly and continuously disbelieved in these. The attempt to produce a basis that would satisfy both Churches was an attempt to produce an ambiguity which should mean one thing to one party and another thing to the other.

At the last meeting of the union committees, when the wording of the preamble was finally arranged, a seemingly slight change was proposed by the United Presbyterian Committee. It was only the introduction of a short clause, or the modification of one already there, and no serious alteration of meaning seemed to result from allowing it. After a little discussion, the Free Church party yielded the point, Mr. Ross among the rest, though he was conscious of a vague feeling of unrest in connection with it. It was not until he had retired for the night, and was lying quietly awake thinking over the matter, that the full significance of the change flashed upon him. So vivid was his impression of having made a blunder which must be rectified at once that, from an instantaneous impulse, he sprang out of bed, as though he could and must by some energetic action set it right again. He saw that the slight change seriously affected the integrity of the Fourth Article of the Union Basis, which it had been the special care of the Free Church Committee to conserve in full strength throughout the negotiations.

The following are the Preamble and Basis of Union finally agreed upon between the two Synods :

"The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the United Presbyterian Church in Canada, believing that it would be for the glory of God and for the advancement of the cause of Christ in the land that they should unite and form one Church, do hereby agree to unite on the following basis, to be subscribed by the moderators of their respective Synods in their names and behalf, declaring at the same time that no inference from the fourth article of said basis is held to be legitimate, which asserts that the civil magistrate has the right to prescribe the faith of the Church or to interfere with the freedom of her ecclesiastical action; further, that unanimity of sentiment is not required in regard to the practical applications of the principle embodied in the said fourth article, and that whatever differences of sentiment may arise on these subjects, all action in reference thereto shall be regulated by, and be subject

to, the recognized principles of Presbyterian Church order :

"I. *Of Holy Scripture.* That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, being the inspired Word of God, are the supreme and infallible rule of faith and life.

"II. *Of the Subordinate Standards.* That the Westminster Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, are received by this Church as her Subordinate Standards. But whereas certain sections of said Confession of Faith, which treat of the power and duty of the civil magistrate, have been objected to as teaching principles adverse both to the right of private judgment in religious matters and to the prerogative which Christ has vested in His Church, it is to be understood :—

"1. That no interpretation or reception of these sections is required by this Church which would interfere with the fullest forbearance as to any difference of opinion which may prevail on the question of the endowment of the Church by the State.

"2. That no interpretation or reception of these sections is required by this Church which would accord to the State any authority to violate the liberty of conscience and right of private judgment which are asserted in Chapter XX., Sec. 2, of the Confession, and in accordance with the statements of which this Church holds that every person ought to be at full liberty to search the Scriptures for himself, and to follow out what he conscientiously believes to be the teaching of Scripture, without let or hindrance, provided that no one be allowed, under the pretext of following the dictates of conscience to interfere with the peace and good order of society.

"3. That no interpretation or reception of these sections is required by this Church which would admit of any interference on the part of the State with the spiritual independence of the Church, as set forth in Chapter XXX. of the Confession.

"III. *Of the Headship of Christ over the Church.* That the Lord Jesus Christ is the only King and Head of His

Church; that He has made her free from all external or secular authority in the administration of her affairs, and that she is bound to assert and defend this liberty to the utmost, and ought not to enter into such engagements with any party as would be prejudicial thereto.

"IV. *Of the Headship of Christ over the Nations, and the Duty of the Civil Magistrate.* That the Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator, is invested with universal sovereignty, and is therefore King of Nations; and that all men, in every capacity and relation, are bound to obey His will as revealed in His Word; and particularly that the Civil Magistrate (including in that term all who are in any way concerned in the legislative or administrative action of the State) is bound to regulate his official procedure, as well as his personal conduct, by the revealed will of Christ.

"V. *Of Church Government.* That the system of polity established in the Westminster Form of Presbyterian Church Government, in so far as it declares plurality of Elders for each congregation, the official equality of Presbyters, without any officers in the Church superior to said Presbyters, and the unity of the Church in a due subordination of a smaller part to a larger, and of a larger to the whole, is the government of the Church, and is, in the features of it herein set forth, believed by this Church to be founded on, and agreeable to, the Word of God.

"VI. That the ordinances of worship shall be administered in this Church as they have heretofore been, by the respective bodies of which it is composed, in a general accordance with the directions contained in the Westminster Directory of Worship."

The above document is a study. The fourth article expresses the doctrine of the Headship of Christ over the Nations in terms explicit enough and strong enough to satisfy the Free Churchman; but that same article in the Preamble is so qualified and guarded that the Voluntary need experience no inconvenience by it. The Westminster Confession, in treating of the duties of the Civil Magistrate, asserts or implies the doctrine of the

Headship of Christ over the Nations, and, in Article II., the Confession is accepted as a subordinate Standard for the whole Church, but under-sections 1, 2, 3 so modify all these statements of the Confession that they mean, to a Voluntary, just what he wishes them to mean.

On the 6th of June, 1861, the union was consummated between the (Free) Presbyterian Church in Canada and the United Presbyterian Church in Canada. The united body took the name of the Canada Presbyterian Church.

Dr. John Bayne, of Galt, and a small party with him, had all along firmly opposed union upon any basis but one stating in clear terms the whole truth and the unmodified truth, as held by the Free Church, on the Headship of Christ over the nations. Within a few months of the consummation of the union, the great man fell in the harness, and so his powerful voice was not heard on the day of union. His absence was sorely felt by the few who sympathized with him, and may have been one reason of the smallness of the number that were ready, "having done all to *stand*," when the day of trial came. Only Mr. Ross's early friend, Mr. Lachlan McPherson, of Williams, and a handful of people in the county of Bruce, stood firmly against the union by refusing to enter into it.

Mr. Ross did not stand out against it. He had been one of the active men about its formation. But his heart was ill at ease on the subject.

"The days that followed the union of '61," he said, years afterward, "were terrible days to me. The majesty and supreme importance of the Kingship of Jesus Christ began so to shine into my soul as to make my very flesh tremble.

"One day on horseback I took out my book and my eyes fell upon that passage, 'until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times he shall show, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.' The very words seemed to shine

like the face of Moses. My eyes could not help looking at them, and I shut the book. My mind was full of this thought. The glory shining in these words is the glory with which God has clothed the Kingship of His Son, and yet men will cut and pare and trim it off to suit the notions of their fellowmen.

"As the Church went on on the crest of the union wave, ready in a few years to do anything that was convenient with the kingship of the King, I was drawn back farther and farther from the position taken in '61, so that extended concession from me in that matter was an impossibility,—except by such a deed as that of Judas."

His part in the matter was a bitter thing to him, and the inner conflicts of those days were written plainly on his countenance, though few understood the cause.

It was early in the year 1862, just after the consummation of the union, while his mind was deeply exercised upon the subject, that the writer first caught a glimpse of his face.

There was a tea meeting in the Bayfield Road chapel, over which my father was minister, and Mr. Logie, of Rodgerville, was one of the speakers expected. The tea was nearly over when he appeared, and with him as he walked up to the walled platform where the ministers sat was a tall, fair, very serious-looking man. As soon as the stranger was fairly seated among his brethren he turned around with a sort of exploring look, and I saw his countenance. The sadness, the settled sadness, that lay in his blue eyes touched my childish heart with a great pity, and well do I remember asking God in prayer that night to put forth His own power to comfort that very sorrowful minister.

"As one whom his mother comforteth, *so*" did the Lord comfort him, though some who knew him during the few following years of unrest might not feel the aptness of the quotation. How does a wise and loving mother comfort a child who has sinned against her, and who has been brought to see and own the wrong that he has done? She will draw the child away from his

sports, and even from his ordinary lessons, into closer communion with herself. In seeking to comfort she will be very careful not to weaken his sense of the sinfulness of his sin, or to give him the impression that the sin is less in her eyes than it is in his. Yet she will seek with all a mother's tenderest skill to shine into that child's heart the love and forgiveness that are yearning for safe and wise expression. Then the distinctive peculiarity of the comfort a mother gives is, that she makes *herself* the comfort. It is not what she does or what she gives that satisfies the heart of her child ; it is what she *is*—what she is *to him*—in her overflowing love and strong appropriation.

So the Lord comforted his servant during the years that followed this first union. He led him deeply to see the sin and danger of the course which he, along with the rest of the Church, had been running with inexcusable heedlessness. Deeper and deeper that lesson was pressed home till his soul was often ready humbly to say : "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." But along with these bitter lessons there was much tender drawing into closer communion with Himself.

A characteristic incident occurred about this time showing the trouble of spirit and the directness of intercourse between him and his Master.

A dark presence seemed to himself to be with him wherever he went, and his soul was harassed. His experience bore some resemblance to that of John Bunyan as described in Grace Abounding, and depicted in Christian's journey through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Thoughts that did not spring from his own brain distressed his spirit and refused to be dismissed. But through all the confusion one refrain would come up—not constantly, but at intervals—"I will put my hook in his nose, and my bridle in his lips, and turn him about by the way that he came."

For days the discord continued, and still the word of power, ever and anon, kept ringing through the chambers of his soul : "I will put my hook in his nose,

and my bridle in his lips, and turn him about by the way that he came." At last, in a sort of impatience, he took up the words and threw them back, saying, "*Put* thy hook in his nose, and thy bridle in his lips." That moment the dark presence vanished, and his spirit was calm again. Though in very different circumstances, yet it was David over again, "Do as thou hast said."

Through those years the conversational method of handling the Bible passed from an occasional to almost a continual thing with him. He looked up to God for a word, and then in the passage to which his finger turned he would find a special message in reply. If there was some uncertainty, another turn of the leaves would give a reduplication of the message, and then he was satisfied that he had the very thought that his Lord wished him to ponder or to use. In this way, while turning over the leaves of his Bible, a real conversation took place between him and his Master, and he lived much in close companionship with an unseen friend.

One afternoon about this time he was preparing for a journey by train. He looked up for a word while dressing, and the one upon which his eye fell was this: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and *of my words* in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

"'Ashamed of me and *of my words*,'" he thought. "Does the Lord mean that to be ashamed of His words is to be ashamed of Him? Would I be ashamed to enter the car this afternoon in Christ's company? Perhaps not. Would I be ashamed to read His words to my fellow-passengers? I think I would. 'Of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.' Let me escape *that* at whatever cost."

From that day he began his wayside reading of the Word of God. Many a straight message fell from the skies into ears that could not choose but listen, and sometimes into hearts that answered, "I will arise and go to my Father."

Some may be tempted to copy Mr. Ross in this. That would not be wise, unless specially led and trained for the service. If *called*, a man will be guided and used. But no man can do this or any work effectually "except it were given him from above." There is surely great danger, in these days of tremendous activity, of *will-service* as well as of will-worship; and the one is as vain as the other. The only safety is in keeping constantly to Paul's prayer: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

In the following, a brother minister gives his testimony concerning Mr. Ross's peculiar methods: "He carried his Bible wherever he went, holding it generally in his hand, and always ready to read a passage from it to any with whom he conversed. I was often struck with the adaptation of the passages which he would read, to persons or circumstances which concerned him. On one occasion I told him that I could not agree with his mode of applying Scriptures without noticing the connection in which they were found; that God had placed within us a reason which He expected us to exercise, rather than notice the passages upon which our fingers rested, and that I had often condemned from the pulpit his mode of applying Divine truth. 'You do right,' was his reply, 'to condemn it, and it would be wrong on your part to follow my mode; but yet,' said he, 'the Spirit directs my very fingers to the passages He would have me, at the time, to read. If I only get any person or thing under my fingers'—pointing to his Bible—'within the covers of this Book, then I am sure the Spirit has something to do with that passage to which my fingers are led; I feel therefore bound to read it, in confidence that the Spirit of God is to do something with it connected with the person to whom I read it. This is one way,' said he, 'which God uses in speaking to my soul, and He leads me to understand His will.'"

He did not blindly read any word that came. Sometimes the writer has seen him turn page after page, and then say disappointedly, "I cannot get a message at all." On one occasion I asked him the question, "How

do you know when He is speaking to you in the words to which you turn?" His answer was prompt and unexpected, "How do I know that you are speaking to me?" and then he answered himself; "Because I know your voice." Thus he declined to reason about it.

There was no miracle in this direct communication by means of the written word; neither was there preternatural skill in manipulating the leaves of the book, as has been suggested by some who could not deny the facts. There was simply a real and beautifully minute special providence. Probably there is scarcely a Christian living who has not occasionally had similar experience; in sore need of comfort or direction, the very thing required has been supplied by the simple opening of that wonderful Book. Then we have felt, "Surely God was in this place and I knew it not;" so vivid was the impression produced of His gracious nearness. With most this is a rare matter; but is it incredible that, when God found one who was ever on the watch for such tokens of His providential goodness, He should take pleasure in constantly revealing Himself in this way? It is well known that the habit of watching for sweet special providences in daily life is always rewarded by an increasing supply of them, or an ever-increasing power to see and enjoy them, probably both.

Another thing about this time became very marked in his experience—prayer about what the world calls little things, and answers so direct and clear that the little things were at once invested with the interest and preciousness of great things.

It may have been two—possibly three—years after the night of the tea-meeting before the writer saw Mr. Ross again; and a most marked change had evidently taken place in the meantime. A deputation had been sent by the Presbytery to the various congregations to awaken a deeper interest in missions. Mr. Ross, Dr. McDonald, now of Seaforth, then of Clinton, and Mr. Barr, of Harpurhey, were its members. Their boyish pranks and spirits were a source of great interest and

amazement that afternoon they spent at our home. Snowballing, upsetting of each other's cutters, and jokes of all descriptions, practical and verbal, were quite the order of the day. It was happy, catching merriment.

The other two ministers went away after the evening meeting, but Mr. Ross returned with the family, and spent an hour or two in delightful talk before retiring. The conversation was not general; my father and he carried it on themselves, while the rest sat around and listened. They were speaking especially about prayer. Mr. Ross gave several instances of prompt answers to special prayer. Then for the first time I heard the story of the loss of his watch in the great cranberry marsh extending for many miles in the County of Huron. He told the story somewhat as follows:

"We drove over one afternoon for a jaunt, to get cranberries if there were any, but to see the place and its curiosities if there were none. There were no cranberries. We amused ourselves for some time as a company; but after a while I wandered away from the rest, on what track of my own I do not now remember. Some hours passed, and I noticed suddenly that the sun was getting low; it was evidently time to gather the party together and go home. As the eye went up to the sun, the hand went to the vest pocket; but my heart sank within me, for it was empty. The first thought was, 'Well, my watch is gone, and it is gone forever.' The absurdity of looking for a watch in the long grass and tangled growths of a cranberry marsh almost made one smile. But the next thought was—'*His* eye sees it exactly where it is'—the next, 'He can guide me to it if He will.'

"I had not moved from the spot or the position where I had first discovered my loss. Without moving from either I dropped on my knees in the grass, and told Him the two thoughts that had come into my heart—that He now saw the watch just where it was lying, and that He could, if He thought best, guide me back to the exact spot. I did not ask Him to do so. My prayer consisted simply in stating to Him the case.

"Then I arose with my position still unchanged. That, I saw, was my only clue to my backward track. Wheeling around I walked slowly back, hoping in that way at least to start right for the retracing of my steps. I went some distance, and then stopped to look around and see if there was any tall clump of grass, or bit of stump or bush, or anything I might recall as having impressed itself upon me in my forward journey. I could see nothing and was just going to move on, when my eye fell to my feet, and there, touching the toe of my left boot, lay the missing watch."

A very vivid impression was left by that evening's intercourse. Here was a man like those described in the Bible. God was real and near to him as He was to Moses when He talked with him face to face. He told God about his missing watch as a little child would tell his father about a lost marble, and God acted in the matter just as a kind earthly father would have done. Then he spoke about it in a happy voice and with a smiling countenance. Do not many Christians pass over the injunction, "Talk ye of all His wondrous works," hiding their best things deep in their own hearts, forgetting that the ringing testimony of another will often cheer the young and downhearted with a great courage.

CHAPTER VII.

THE KING'S MESSENGER.

IN the preceding chapter we followed the subject of these pages through periods of deep soul-conflict and out again into sunnier regions. These were times of special training for years of special service. He now began in a peculiar sense to act the part of the king's messenger.

He had been given clearer views of the King Himself. He had "seen the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up." He had shared in the prophet's responsive trouble—"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the king, the LORD of hosts." And he sent up the prophet's answer to the King's inquiry after a messenger,—"Here am I; send me." Were not his lips, too, touched with a live coal from off the altar?

Then he had been given a peculiar interest in the Bible. Listening as he read for the present voice of the Master, and learning to hear it constantly, the Book became to him as it never had been before, the word—the message—of the King.

From this time he walked through the world with the Bible in his hand, ready to give the King's message in the King's name wherever a hearing ear was to be found, and these were often found where many would never think of looking for them.

Riding with a friend to Clinton one day, they were passing some laborers making repairs on the road. "Mr. Ross asked me to stop;" narrates his companion, "then he took out his Bible, which was his constant

companion, and began reading. The men all stopped work. When they heard the Scripture, one of them uncovered his head. His example was followed by all the rest, some four or five. Mr. Ross read a few verses, then made a very appropriate application of the passage, a thing which few could do better. When he had finished his short but solemn appeal, we drove on. He sat silent for a while, and then said—'I liked that. These men showed reverence for the word. I wish all the people had a similar spirit.'"

This wish was often deeply felt, and on one occasion found an interesting expression. A discussion had arisen as to the relative excellence of Martha and Mary in the one home scene where they are represented as differing. The fact that the Lord set the seal of His approval upon Mary's conduct did not prevent some practical person present from declaring decidedly in favor of Martha. "It was all very well," she said, "for Mary to sit and listen while Martha was busy with the dinner; but if both had acted as Mary did, the meal for this large company that had come in upon them would either have been very scanty or very late. Mary had her way of honoring Christ, but Martha had her way of doing the same, and a very important way too, in this world of daily necessity."

Mr. Ross did not like this view. "No," he said, "Mary was right, and Martha would have honored Christ more if she had done as Mary did. *While He was speaking*, the only way to honor Him was to stop work and listen. The Lord would not have continued talking so long as unduly to interfere with household duties. When He stopped speaking, both would have been free to attend to these." The heart of the under-messenger understood the heart of the Great Messenger in His hunger for the hearing ear. "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." How reiterated was this appeal! "I have meat to eat that ye know not of"—simply because He had found an ear that was willing to listen.

But very frequently Mr. Ross enjoyed the refreshing experience afforded to the Master by Mary's rapt atten-

tion, and to himself by the reverent action of the laborers on the roadside. He had been driven to Underwood to catch the stage for Kincardine, which was to start about 10 a.m. It was an election day, and the village, and especially the hotel, were crowded with voters. Mr. Ross quickly took in the situation, and, being about twenty minutes early, he stationed himself in the middle of the road opposite the hotel and opened his Bible. He had a voice that could make itself heard through stone walls, if necessary, and he read out a word of Scripture in a style that commanded attention in the dining-room and bar-room as well as from the outmost corners of the little village. The rooms of the hotel were quickly emptied, and a reverent company stood in front of the building, while passers-by halted, and distant figures were seen quickly and quietly gathering in. Text after text was read and earnestly pressed home during the few minutes of waiting. When he ceased speaking, the crowd slowly scattered as quietly as they had gathered, and not a few to this day remember reverently that serious twenty minutes in front of the hotel.

But it was not always to such listeners that he found himself summoned to deliver the message. In the spring of 1874 he, in company with a friend, was passing a crowd gathered thick around a circus tent. His spirit was stirred within him when he saw the multitude wholly given to foolishness, and he opened his Bible and read them a text. Another and another, without note or comment, went sounding over the heads of the people, reaching their ears whether they would or not. A spirit of opposition began to manifest itself. Sneers and ridicule and profane words were thrown back at him. But the King's messenger tarried not for these. Then the nearer portion of the mass began to bear down upon him, as though to crowd him off the ground.

"When I saw what they were about," he said, in giving an account of the scene, "I felt a little anxious over a new silk hat for which I had just paid $7.00. I handed that to my friend that I might be free to face

them. For you see," he added, "you can, if you choose, cut clear through a moving crowd, if you only know how." He certainly did not choose to be crowded off the scene, and set his face in the opposite direction. The consequence was that, instead of remaining on the outskirts of the mass of people, he soon was in their midst; and the men who had intended to crowd him off heard his voice behind them sounding out text after text from the opening pages of his Bible, whose appropriateness and electric power gave to the reader an immediate and conscious sense of triumph.

Six months later he was in Toronto again. A friend then reported to him an interesting conversation in which she had recently taken part. In a company of ladies Mr. Ross and his peculiar method of reading out Bible words came up for discussion. The general feeling seemed to be adverse, and was in some cases energetically expressed. One adduced his reading the Bible to a circus crowd as a superlative exhibition of folly. A lady who had not before taken part in the conversation at once spoke up.

"You better not call that folly," she said. "My servant was in the crowd that day, and one of the texts read took such a hold upon her that she has been a different girl ever since."

It had been bread cast upon the waters—most turbid, unpromising waters. It was a beautiful, providential arrangement that one bright, springing blade of responsive life was allowed to cheer the heart of him who, in simple faith and obedience, had scattered the seed.

There was one thing he did not seem able to let pass —that was the taking of God's name in vain. "Did you ever notice," asked a friend lately, "how Mr. Ross's temper would rise if men would continue swearing after being reproved?" "I have seen him," he continued, "listen to insulting words to himself without the slightest stirring of temper. He would smile with happy countenance upon those who said disrespectful things, as if it did not hurt him at all. But if men would take the name of God in vain, his

quickness of feeling on the subject carried him sometimes, I believe, further than his judgment afterward would approve."

A case in point, perhaps, is that of a railway conductor who swore in his presence. Mr. Ross, sitting near, recited at once the third commandment. The profane man, caught in the act and thus solemnly met with the commandment of the God he had impudently defied, seemed suddenly possessed with the very spirit of evil, and let loose his tongue in a torrent of abuse and profanity. Mr. Ross answered him with truths men of the world are not in the habit of hearing. The angry official flashed back a parting volley as he was leaving the car. Mr. Ross, who occupied the seat next to the door, laid his hand on the side of the doorway, and leaned forward to give him a reply, when the conductor, acting from a sudden evil impulse, paused long enough to catch the handle of the car door and draw it after him with a furious bang. The blood spurted from two of Mr. Ross's fingers and scattered in drops over the glass door of the next car. When he returned home a few days later his fingers were still sore, but he said the pain he endured in them for some time after it happened he would scarcely have believed possible from so small a thing.

On another occasion he was able to keep temper down altogether. A brother minister stepped with him into an hotel dining room in Paris. Three or four men were present who were most fearful blasphemers. It became perfectly intolerable Mr. Ross's companion spoke to them and asked them to cease, but they only got the worse. The ministers found that the men were Roman Catholics. The men were not slow to surmise that the strangers were Protestants and ministers, and this gave only a keener relish to their profane jocularity. Mr. Ross rose from the table, went over to the coarsest of them, and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"You and I owe too much to Jesus Christ," he said, "to speak ill of Him."

The man quieted at once, and they all parted good friends.

The following incident, kindly communicated by Rev. Prin. McVicar, shows the same man again in similar circumstances.

"Travelling in a Pullman car, on one occasion, he remonstrated with a company of card-players, begging them to cease their game, when one of them emphatically requested him to 'mind his own business.'

"He answered gently but frankly, 'I am just doing so. I have no other business on earth but to bear witness to the truth.' He then returned to his seat, not far from the group. Shortly after they quarrelled among themselves, and one of them used profane words, whereupon Mr. Ross, true to his mission, instantly came forward and, with his hand uplifted over the head of the offender, repeated the words: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.'

"The effect was salutary. One of the party confessed that they were wrong, and the game was given up."

The same writer draws attention to the tact with which Mr. Ross would make an opportunity to speak for the King in circumstances that did not seem at all adapted to afford it. He says: "I have known him to deliver effective testimony in circumstances where most men would see no opportunity of preaching the gospel. Many instances of this sort of wayside service, in which his Master was so abundant, might be mentioned.

"In the city of Quebec, during the meeting of General Assembly, he had occasion to enter a store. Having purchased some small articles, he proceeded, in cheerful, kindly words to tell the proprietor, a French Roman Catholic, how he was attracted into his shop by the artistic display of goods in his window. He expressed his warm appreciation of his method of doing business, and especially of showing his goods to advantage, and added, 'Perhaps you would like to know something of the goods *I* handle.'

"The Frenchman, with characteristic politeness, assured him that this would give him great pleasure. Opening his Bible Mr. Ross read, "I counsel thee to

buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, etc.' 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.' 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' 'And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'

"These, and other passages, rich in gospel truth, were lovingly pressed upon the heart and conscience of his deeply interested hearer, who cordially thanked him, and expressed his conviction that it would be a good thing if many others followed his example in intercourse with their fellowmen."

As this catching at trivial circumstances to secure a natural opening for the delivery of a message was an important feature in Mr. Ross's wayside service, it may not be out of place to give several instances. He held himself quite ready, when no natural opening was or could be found, to deliver the message straight, without either preparation or prelude, or even understanding the appropriateness of what he felt commissioned to deliver. Many illustrations of this manner of service can be given. But his instinct was, wherever possible, by some pleasant turn of the conversation, or calling attention to something already interesting, to prepare a lodgment for the message before he launched it.

One evening in harvest time he called at the house of one of his people. Candles had not been lighted. Father and mother and a large family of very promising children were gathered in front of the house, enjoying the comparative coolness, and the light of the harvest moon. He came up among them and chatted pleasantly for a few minutes. Then he pointed to the ruddy full moon, and drew attention to its color.

"Children," he said, "though men are not thinking about it, the day of the Lord is coming as a thief in the

night. 'The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before that great and notable day of the Lord come.' Now, when you see that round, red moon, let it say to you, 'Little children will need a refuge that day as well as grown-up people, and there is no refuge but one, and that is *the name* of the *Lord Jesus Christ*.' 'There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.'"

"It made a deep impression upon us all," said my informant. "That night I lay awake a long time, thinking of the red moon and the Day of Judgment, and the need of a refuge for a little girl like me. Then Jesus Christ was the one refuge, and He had said, 'Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.' The next day we talked a great deal about this amongst ourselves, and asked many questions of father and mother, who took just as deep an interest in the subject as we did."

Was it not a strong point gained to have constituted the moon in the evening sky a continuous preacher to a whole family? And how simply it was done!

There is a mile between the old Brucefield manse and the village. While passing up this bit of road one day Mr. Ross was met by a young man selling books, who stopped and asked him to inspect his stock. He did as desired, but I am not informed whether he made a purchase or not, though, judging by character and consequences, probably he did. After satisfying the young man with attention to his stock, he passed naturally from the books he had been examining to the one he carried in his hand.

"Now, sir," he said, "I have looked at your books, will you listen to mine?" Then he read to him a passage or two under guidance of Him who counts the hairs and directs the falling of a sparrow. These came to the reader as well as to the listener with the authority of a message straight from the King. So deep was the impression upon both that the minister did what was not usual in such circumstances—he proposed prayer there and then. They kneeled down together on the roadside,

and the voice of responsive allegiance answered the message of royal authority. Then Mr. Ross went his way, and the young stranger went his; but the change wrought in him was like that in Zaccheus as he came down from the tree. From that hour he walked through life under a new Master, lived as a decided Christian, and became an elder in the congregation of the minister who reported the circumstances of his conversion.

Another instance of this watching for opportunities of lodging a message is given by Dr. McDonald:

"We were spending the night at Goderich, on our return from a mission tour north, and next morning were getting ready to go home. As usual I was looking after the horses and attending to the bills. Mr. Ross was busy with his Bible. When all was ready and we were about to start, Mr. Ross came to the hostler, and read to him the story of Christ's birth. Then he exhorted the man not to get low because he had what many might deem a very inferior position, but to remember that his Lord and Saviour had sanctified the stable by being born in it; and urged him not to despise that Saviour's love."

A beautiful illustration of this skilful utilizing of circumstances is seen in the way he dealt with a young man who called early one morning at the manse and wanted to see the master of the house. The information that he had not yet risen did not have the desired effect. He said he would wait. He had important business and could not call again. Mr. Ross was reluctantly summoned, and was not long in making his appearance. The visitor turned out to he an agent, wanting to leave a comparatively worthless book that was to cost $4.50.

Mr. Ross looked perplexed, and turned the book over several times, as if he did not quite know what to do. Then he looked at the young stranger with a curious mixture of kindliness, concern and amusement in his face, he said:

"I know you have my name down for this book; but do you remember how you got it, and on what condition it was given?"

The young man made no reply.

"You got it simply because you would not go away without it; and you got it with the distinct understanding that, if I should be out of money when you brought it, I should be free."

No answer, only a darkening of countenance.

"Now, I have no money."

Still no answer, but an increase of gloom.

Then Mr. Ross went on in a different tone:

"But I'll tell you what I will do. You have my name. Though you know I am free in the circumstances, still, you have my name. If you leave me the book and give me your address, I shall send you the money when it comes in."

How the youth's countenance beamed satisfaction and surprise, while he expressed his pleasure at the arrangement. He handed his address, and was promptly bowing himself out when Mr. Ross stopped him, saying:

"Wait a little," and, taking up his Bible, he asked, "Do you ever read this book?"

"Yes, sir, sometimes."

There was a light in the minister's eye as he went on:

"But only reading it will not do you any good. This book is full of promises to which the name of the living God is solemnly attached. But does the mere reading of a promise make it yours? If, instead of coming in to me with my promise this morning, you had taken out your order-book and driven past my door reading my order with my name attached—reading it over and over as you went along—would that have done you any good? You were not content with merely reading my promise this morning. You came in and asked me to fulfil it. And you acted sensibly. To have stopped short of that would not have been a business-like use of the power I gave you when I gave my name. And see the result. Though you know I could honorably have got out of it, yet I had such a regard to my own name, that I gave you what you wanted as far as it was possible. Now do you see the power God has given us over Himself when He has given us *His name?* If a man will do

much for the honor of his name, what may we not expect from the God of everlasting truth and infinite resources? Do not be content with merely reading over His promises, but bring them back to Himself in a business-like way, as you did mine to me this morning. Use the Bible in this way, and you will find it a perfect mine of wealth and power. Good-bye."

He shook hands kindly with the young stranger, and then turned back for a little to the well-worn Bible of which he had been speaking, consciously the richer for the happy illustration the circumstances of the morning had given him. Did the young man learn to use the marvellous key so distinctly laid into his hand? Who can tell?

Dear reader, have you grasped this key? and have you found the power that lies in it? David used it when he received God's far-reaching promise: "The Lord will build thee an house, and thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever." Although the greatness and exceeding glory of that promise almost staggered him, he went boldly back with it to the Promiser, and clinched it with the appropriating prayer, "Do as thou hast said." Mary used it when she received the promise she would have chosen above all others to receive. In humble, joyful, appropriating faith she answered, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word." Christian called it to remembrance when, sunk in the mire and darkness of Giant Despair's dungeon, he suddenly "broke out in this passionate speech: What a fool, quoth he, am I, thus to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom called promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." It did not open the locks while lying unused in his bosom; but when he plucked it out of his bosom and tried it, not a lock in the whole castle could withstand its power.

Closely linked with the above is a passage in a sermon preached several years later. His text was, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salva-

tion." The question was first asked: "Where are the wells of salvation to be found? However willing to draw, we cannot do it unless we know where the wells are to be found." The answer was given in a passage somewhat like the following: "The wells of salvation are the covenants, the books, the chapters and the paragraphs of the Word of God. The Bible is full to the brim of the water of life. But you cannot drink it unless you draw it, and unbelief keeps you back and you say, I am longing for a drink of that water, but it is too good for me; I have no right to it. But observe that there is only one thing which gives the best or the worst a right to draw it—*the invitation of Him whose it is. He* says: 'Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.' Is there a promise in the Bible that contains the very thing for which your soul is thirsting? Then go, and with no other title than His invitation *draw* it. Take it as your own. Drink down every element of blessing there is in it, and tell Him whose it is that you have done so. Do you think He will ever rebuke the weakest, vilest sinner for drinking out of His own well at His own invitation? Draw water with joy out of those wells of salvation. 'Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.' Never did you at your own table press so sincerely your choicest dainties upon the friends gathered round it as Jesus Christ does when He calls, 'Ho! everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.'"

It was a flood of light let in upon that precious verse, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." I had long known that that meant a wide open door of invitation to—literally—"whosoever will;" that it made everyone free to take, and to take freely, the choicest blessings of His salvation. But the point that lay in darkness for years was this, and others may have the same difficulty: *How* am I to *take?* What is the action, in response to His free invitation, that will make these heavenly realities mine? That sermon made

it plain. I was to search the Bible for the promises containing exactly what I wanted. On the strength of His invitation I was to take each one as it was needed and count it my own, and then take it back to Himself as a ground for expectant, prevailing prayer; take it back, as David did, telling Him how good it was, thanking Him for it, and always finishing up with the word that to the faithful Promiser is sweet and irresistible, "Now, Lord, do as Thou has said."

Mr. Ross delighted in sweeping away the ifs and buts, and qualifications which the hungry soul is always piling up between itself and the Bread of Life; and, upon the simple strength of Christ's invitation, setting it down at the loaded table. He often quoted this word, "My son, eat thou honey because it is good, and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste," and along with it the response of the responsive soul, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." The sweetest work the King's messenger has to do is to announce in the ears of the really hungry the blessed invitation, "Come, for all things are now ready," while the saddest is to deliver the same message to those who all, with one consent, begin to make excuse.

This chapter may be appropriately closed with the story of his victory as the King's messenger over the smoking habit.

As a young man Mr. Ross had never learned to use tobacco. But during the early part of his ministry, in days of loneliness and oppression, he found a temporary soothing from a smoke. He was not long in becoming one of the most extravagant of smokers.

"Such a slave did I become to the habit," he said, "that I could not wait in the morning until dressed and ready to fill a pipe. So I got into the way of filling it the night before that I might take my first smoke while dressing."

He gave the following account of how he was led at last to assert himself against such bondage:

"One day I was in my study smoking a rather disreputable-looking, short-stemmed, black clay pipe.

I was meditating upon the 'glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which is committed to my trust,' I. Timothy 1 : 11. I thought, What an honorable commission! Well might Paul thank God who had enabled him and counted him faithful, and put him into this ministry. Then I thought of the vision in Revelation 14 : 6, 'I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to many nations and kindreds and peoples!' As I thought upon these things I reflected that I am myself called to this high and honorable ministry that Paul rejoiced in, and that an angel was glad to undertake.

"At that moment, when my mind was full of the dignity and glory of my calling and mission, it occurred to me, How would I look in such exalted company, and on such a mission, with my cutty pipe in my mouth? The picture was so incongruous and grotesque that I took the pipe and threw it against the wall, smashing it to atoms. I never smoked again."

Had he, under that impulse, only broken the pipe, his resolution would have been overborne before many hours. The next step was to search through every pocket and shelf and drawer for the smallest fragment of tobacco, and throw them all into the stove. He distrusted his own resolution, knowing the tremendous strain it would have to stand. It was genuine, but he knew it would not prove strong enough; so, while the resolution was at its height and the temptation as yet weak, he put it out of his power to yield when the temptation should have grown stronger.

It was well for the conclusion of the story that he did so. As the evening of that memorable day wore on, the craving for the customary pipe grew stronger and stronger till it became intolerable. He went feverishly through all his pockets and shelves and drawers again to see if some small morsel of the sorely-needed narcotic had eluded his first search. Not a scrap was to be found, but he came across some red pepper pods in one of his drawers.

"Anything is better than nothing," he said to himself, as he cut up one of the dry, shiny red pods and filled another pipe. How many whiffs of this remarkable substitute for tobacco were required to satisfy or obliterate the original craving has not been recorded. But in a few seconds he heard his sister's window thrown up as high as it would go, and an excited voice called out—

"John, John, what in the world is the matter?"

The healthful and comical elements in the scene helped to carry him over that time of need, and the victory was eventually gained over a strong and insidious enemy.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GUIDING EYE AND THE HEARING EAR.

THERE was another and a simpler form of service to which Mr. Ross felt himself continually called during the last twenty years of his life. This was the delivery of messages dictated, not by his own intelligence, but by special direction from an unseen Lord. Some have scoffed under these special messages, some have been puzzled, many have trembled, and very many have heard in them the voice of the King Himself.

It is certainly a simple form of service, to have words put into the mouth, and nothing to do but to deliver them: but apart from the simplicity of faith to match the simplicity of the service, it is the most impossible sort of work that could be imposed. "Christ has need of messengers that are willing to be made fools of for His sake," said Mr. Ross, in speaking on this subject. "Though men may sneer, all I need to know is that the Lord has given me a text and shown me to whom it is to be given, and my business is to give that text, and let Him work out the consequences."

That the sort of guidance received through the turning of the leaves of the Bible may be better understood, it may be well to copy out a specimen extract from one of his note books. It bears date Saturday, November 16th, and belongs to the year 1872:

"Visited D—— M——. Found him very ill, greatly reduced. Much pleased with the frame of spirit in which I found him. Saw there J. M.'s wife, but did not say anything to her at once about the things of the Kingdom, and when I wished to speak to her she was

gone. Baptised D—— M—— and all his children but the eldest. May they all be truly the Lord's own. Felt encouraged to take the step of administering baptism at once, though we had before arranged for Tuesday evening. After we had made the arrangement, met and read to him, "'See that ye refuse not him that speaketh,' and, at the next turn, 'Again he limiteth a certain day, saying, to-day, after so long a time, to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.' After prayer went away as far as the kitchen on my way out. Thought of the danger of delay, and that it would be best to administer baptism at once. On going in and asking if he would have baptism now, he assented. On taking the book again, met the question put to the blind man, 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?' 'Lord, that I may receive my sight.' 'Receive thy sight, thy faith hath saved thee.' Turning from these words met, 'For as many as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ,' and again, 'Repent, and be baptised every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost,' and again, the Philippian jailor, 'He was baptised, he and all his straightway.' Met in the house before I had begun speaking, 'Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it, for thou hast a little strength.' After baptism, met and read to him, 'Now to him that is of power to stablish you, according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ—to God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.' Rom. xvi. 25. Then read to him as it met me the end of the 39th Psalm :

> 'O spare thou me that I my strength
> Recover may again,
> Before from hence I do depart
> And here no more remain.'

Gave him the book to read it, and to send it to God as his own petition. Met now when turning up the Bible for the passage in Romans, Acts xx., 'Sorrowing most of all for the words that he spake, that they should see

his face no more.' The next passage I met was the one I was wanting, Romans xvi., 25.

"I have no doubt that the Lord sent me to Mr. M., and that what I did was under his own guidance, and in obedience to His word. While at Mr. K.'s, thinking of the whole circumstances of Mr. M.'s case, met, 'Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.' Let me record all these things and ponder them in my heart, and let me learn from them the lessons they evidently teach."

This extract is full of characteristic touches, but these may be missed by those not personally acquainted with the man, and the way his Bible was made to talk to him. It may admit of a little opening up in this respect. It was Friday evening when he visited Mr. M——. The first arrangement was that he should announce on the following Sabbath a prayer meeting to be held at the house on the next Tuesday evening, at which the ordinance of baptism should be regularly and publicly administered. Just before leaving he was met by two texts which he read to the sick man, evidently at first thinking they were meant for him, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh," and "To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts." Under that impression, he bade the invalid good-bye. But before leaving the house the circumstances led him to consider that the texts he had just read might possibly be intended for himself, that they were directing him to do *to-day* what he had arranged to do on Tuesday. With this thought in his mind he went back, and found no obstacle in the feelings of the sick man to the immediate administering of the ordinance. Still he was perplexed. He was not rash in his management of affairs, and always extremely careful in consulting his session in any matters of importance. There would be a haste and apparent highhandedness in this sudden and unannounced way of doing so serious a thing. It was all right if he got his orders distinctly from above, but he evidently felt hesitant. Just then he met the verse that was always peculiarly welcome when consciously needing

guidance, Christ's question to the blind man, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" That question he took as the Lord's free invitation to himself to ask what he would. He confidently sent back the blind man's request for the opening of his eyes, and took Christ's answer to himself, sure then that unerring guidance would be given. After this little passage between him and his Lord, the next three texts, all graciously pointing to baptism, made the matter as plain as sunlight to him, and he went fearlessly on to the work appointed. . The texts at the close, in their perfect applicability were all confirmatory of his faith that he had been led by the Lord, not by his own thoughts.

These things occurred Friday evening. It was Saturday when he wrote down the account, meeting, while pondering and recording the matter, with the significant text, "Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more." On Sabbath evening the sick man died, and the funeral took place on the Tuesday that had at first been appointed for the baptism.

It would be plainly impossible for any man at will to use the Bible in this way. But those who believe in the minute special providence taught by Jesus Christ, cannot fail to see how easy and natural the whole thing becomes *if God chooses* so to lead any of His people. That He did so lead Mr. Ross in multitudes of cases even opposers were often compelled to acknowledge, but those who knew him best were best assured of the fact. A few illustrative cases will make the matter plainer to those not acquainted with him personally.

One Sabbath afternoon he had been visiting one of his elders, who was evidently nearing the end of the Valley of the Shadow. Coming away from the house he was met by one of his people, a vigorous farmer, accompanied by his daughter, on their way to pay a last visit to the sick man, too. Mr. Ross raised his hand to stop them as they came forward, and then simply read them the verse, "Therefore be ye also ready, for in such

an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." The next Thursday morning, in climbing into the loft of his own barn, the man to whom the text was read slipped and fell, so injuring himself that he became at once unconscious. He lingered in that condition for a few days and then passed away.

At his funeral, as the body was being carried from the home, Mr. Ross addressed a young girl who was silently and sorrowfully watching the scene. "It will be your turn soon," he said, "to dwell in the house of mourning. Be making ready by turning to the Lord Himself as your Refuge." Five weeks from that time, her father who was then in ordinary health, took ill and died. What was the text that had been made significant to him concerning her, he did not state, but it was only on the authority of some *word* that he ever spoke in this way to anyone.

A few years before his death he created considerable excitement by announcing from the pulpit that death—sudden death—was hovering over the community. He could not tell where it would strike, but warned them all to be making sure work for eternity. A few days later, before the next Sabbath, a young man in the neighborhood was crushed by a falling tree.

He was called on one occasion to assist at a communion. In the congregation were three special old women. Good women they were, of genuine Highland stock, but with their religious life seriously marred by a peculiar form of humble self-righteousness often found in truly godly circles. Gentle attempts had been made by a Christian friend to lead them into the real humility of the publican and up from that into the joyful liberty there is in Christ. But these attempts had been met by some ruffling up of feathers, and a plain intimation that the humility of the publican was too low, and the liberty of assured confidence in Christ was too high for people so correct in conduct and so well-instructed in the faith as they were. Yet these women were among those who greatly enjoyed Mr. Ross's preaching, and deeply respected him as one with whom the word of God dwelt in a manner and measure beyond many.

At the close of one of the preparatory services these three women, moving slowly out with the rest of the congregation, were standing almost together near the door of the church. Mr. Ross left the pulpit, where he had been quietly turning over the leaves of his book, and came straight down the aisle with his Bible open in his hand. He paused beside them and read out the words, "I am afraid of you lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." That was all, and the women moved silently away and went home. But an arrow had been cast—a tripple arrow. Deep searchings of heart followed, from which there was no rest until each of the three was brought down to the low place of the publican, and up from that into the perfect liberty of justification by faith alone, and of a well-grounded peace with God.

The word of God is still "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," but only when it is in reality the "sword *of the Spirit.*" When directed by Him and used by Him it is equal to anything; otherwise it is as powerless to help as the ark of the God of Israel in the hands of Hophni and Phinehas. Is it not the case that when the human elements in any service are at the minimum, results appear at the maximum? God has wonderfully arranged to employ human agency in working out His marvels; but it is human weakness rather than human strength. Strength and wisdom in an agent seem to be a hindrance to Him still even as they were in Gideon's days. When He had found a man willing simply to read His word as directed, He had found one whom He could safely use. The power was then manifestly in the word, not in the man.

The following story illustrates again the meetness "for the Master's use" Mr. Ross acquired through his simple, unreasoning willingness to read as directed. Besides being appropriate in this connection, it has strong points of intrinsic interest.

A minister's wife, Mrs. A——, had no settled peace or satisfactory assurance of her interest in Christ. For two years she had been seeking clearer light, but without a positive conviction that what she sought was, in

her case, attainable. She was often inclined to think that what she needed was not a higher step into clearer light, but patience to be content with the darkness and weakness which were her portion. This view of the matter was to a certain extent a comfortable one. It made God responsible for the darkness and weakness of her Christian life, and not her own unbelief or spiritual indolence. Her friend Mrs. B——, who was steadily seeking to lead her on, instead of comforting her where she was, was sometimes reproached as acting cruelly.

Both were acquainted with Mr. Ross, and Mrs. A—— said one day, almost petulantly :

"I don't think Mr. Ross would deal with me as you do."

"I would be most willing to leave your case with him ; " was the reply, "he would not give you comfort before the time."

But how was it to be brought about that Mr. Ross and the inquirer should meet? Mrs. B—— suggested that he should be invited to assist at the next communion. The minister, on account of some niceties of ministerial etiquette, did not approve, and announced his intention of inviting someone else. There was nothing to do but to pray that God Himself would so guide that the man by whom He would work might be sent. Soon after, the minister dropped in with a letter from the man he had invited, saying it was quite impossible for him to respond to the call. He added, after reading the letter,

"I suppose I had better ask Mr. Ross, after all."

The two friends were now all expectation. It was agreed between them that Mr. Ross should receive no intimation whatever as to Mrs. A.'s state of mind.

That the next scene may be understood, it must be mentioned that one of Mrs. A.'s daughters had recently entered into a clear knowledge of her acceptance in Christ. But the mother noticed with some disapprobation that this child Christian, who had attained to so glad a confidence in Christ as her surety, was yet not exhibiting all the perfection of Christian graces she thought ought to accompany such an attainment of faith.

When Mr. Ross came amongst them he had, as was his wont, his Bible in his hand, and read, according as the texts met his eye. After greeting Mrs. A——, he startled the poor woman, who had been looking for comfort, by reading to her these two texts : "Arise, ye careless women that are at ease," and "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion."* He then turned to the daughter and read her this glorious passage : "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." The mother's heart rebelled at the treatment given her. Why should the child, whose life was so full of faults, be given such a portion, while she who had borne the burden and heat of the day was met with such a thrust?

Her friend, Mrs. B——, tried to show her, out of her own mouth, the mistake she was making—that self-righteousness, and a consequent inability to wrap herself all up in the righteousness of another—that these were the secret of all her trouble.

The arrow entered. She saw distinctly that there was something entirely wrong about her, and something that *must* be set right. She shut herself into her room, and, in an agony of mind, sought to obtain what she needed from God. She was very much in earnest to succeed, and wanted to make a bargain with Him. "Give me this assured peace in Christ," she said, "and then take away my life if thou wilt."

She went further still. "Give me this peace in Christ," she cried, "and then take my children if thou wilt, everyone of them; but give me life, and the assurance of it." But it seemed as if the experience of the prophets of Baal was hers over again : "And it came to pass that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." She had not yet

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* The fact that he read *two* texts indicates that he had hesitated about reading the first one that met him; but, finding it reduplicated, he gave them both fearlessly, leaving God to do what he would with His own message.

learned the A B C of the glad tidings—that God's salvation is not to be bought, but is *given*, *freely*, to "whosoever will." She needed teaching, and He who is limited to no one method taught her according to His own good pleasure.

In weariness and helplessness she fell asleep. Then she saw, as it were, the Lamb that had been slain thrown out as in a picture upon the wall, and a voice said, "*Behold* the Lamb of God." She looked, and as she looked the utter simplicity of the action God asks from the sinner entered into her soul. She was to *behold* the Lamb; she could do *that*. She was to *look* at the serpent on the pole—to answer Christ's call, "*Look* unto me." She could do *that*. She *looked*, and a great calm settled upon her spirit.

Then her eyes fell upon her own hands, and she saw them black—black right through to the bone. She realized in her dream that this blackness was sin, and that it was through and through her whole nature and life in a way she had never understood before. But she had scarcely time to be dismayed at the discovery, for the Lamb said to her: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Effective cleansing as the Lamb's work, not her own attainment, was another old truth that shined newly out upon her, and filled her with a hitherto unknown hope and courage.

As she continued looking, three old men drew near the Lamb. Two of them seemed to enjoy close and sweet companionship with Him; but the third appeared afraid and wanting the other two to communicate for him. The two old men kept beckoning him to come and speak for himself. They shook their heads, and seemed to want him to understand that they could not communicate for him, but he must do that for himself. "They acted like—like a man that hadn't the Gaelic," she said, in narrating the dream afterward.

Then she awoke; but He who can still teach by dreams of the night, if He will, had effectually conveyed

to her mind the three spiritual truths of which she stood specially in need—life for a look, cleansing by the blood, and continuous supplies of grace by direct communication with Himself.

The writer hesitated a little about using this beautiful story because of an element of danger in it. There are some who attach more weight to a dream or some extraordinary experience than to the simple written word of the living God. They are inclined to put the faith that originates in something marvellous in a higher place than that which rests in childlike faith upon the Word of God, and that alone. Those who do so should study Christ's words to Thomas. He refused to believe in the resurrection of Christ unless some peculiar proof were given to him personally. Jesus in meeting this, his sin and infirmity, with a special exhibition of His hands and His side, yet gently rebukes him for his unbelief, and pronounces a peculiar blessing on them who "have not seen, and yet have believed." In the same way God does sometimes depart from ordinary means to pull out of the net some who have got themselves involved in peculiar intricacies of unbelief. But the blessing Jesus Himself put past Thomas goes also past these, and comes in approving benediction upon those who, with more childlike faith, receive the truth of God upon the simple authority of the Word of God.

He who takes guidance from God's eye is sure to have close access to his ear. Mr. Ross was pre-eminently a man of prayer.

"One night while he was staying with us," said a friend in Hamilton, "I was waked by the sound of a voice, not loud but distinct. Mr. Ross's room was next to mine, and I could hear him in prayer. It was Gaelic he was using, so I could not closely follow what was said, even if inclined to do so, but I could easily hear the names. One Scotch name came after another, and some of them very Scotch. I knew he was praying, while the rest of the world was sleeping, for some of the families or members of his congregation."

"As long as reason serves me," writes another,

"there is one night I shall not forget. It was the time of the summer sacrament, and a fine, bright moonlight night. I awoke and heard some one talking outside. I got up and raised my window a little to listen, and heard Mr. Ross talking very plainly. For a minute I wondered who he was talking to, as I thought it must be late, but while I was listening the clock struck two. He was praying for his wife, and especially for his little child. He said, "O Lord, if it be thy will, spare her life and make her useful. But if we are to make an *idol* of her, take her away.' Then he spoke of a man that had been drinking, and called him Donald. He seemed to be troubling Mr. Ross very much that night."

It was his constant habit before leaving home, no matter what the hurry might be, to call his family all together and put them briefly upon God's care.

"Do you not fret about your household," inquired a friend, "when you are away from them so much?"

"No," he answered, "I put them all on God's care before I leave, and I know He takes better care of them than I could. When I am away I feel free to attend to the work He gives me to do, and let other thoughts alone. And I always find them all right when I get home."

This is a God-honoring kind of prayer. It looks up to Our Father as one who is abundantly worthy of confidence. There might be something surprising to anxious-minded Christians in investigating the reasonableness of such faith. May it not be that the unworthy fears of Christians do as much to damage God's reputation in this world as to injure their own comfort? It is said that many a bank has been broken because of needless fears on the part of those who had trusted it. If such fears could have broken the bank of Heaven it would have vanished from the history of mankind long ago. Though no panic can tax either God's faithfulness or his resources, yet the unbelieving anxieties of those who have His arm as their strength and His word as their pledge go very far to damage His credit in the world. Is it any wonder that He who is jealous for His own

great name should reiterate His command and entreaty to His people, "Fear not," "Be not dismayed," "Let not your heart be troubled," "Be careful for nothing."

Mr. Ross found subjects for prayer where many would not look for them. The *Daily Globe* was always to him a matter of special interest. He seldom spent much time upon it, but before it was laid down he had inspected, not by any means read, every column and corner of the parts devoted to news.

"The world is my parish," he said, "and I must know what God is doing in every corner of it."

What the daily paper meant to him, and the use he made of many a seemingly insignificant item, may be gathered from the following instance. The note book containing a memorandum of it lies open beside me, and the page bears date, Thursday, March 19th, 1868. In relating the circumstance years afterward he said:

"I was sitting that morning peacefully looking over last night's *Globe*. In the summary of news appeared an item that ran somewhat as follows: 'The Emperor of the French has just returned from the court of Berlin, and intends in a few weeks to make a visit to the royal house of Russia.' As the words came under my eye, I seemed to get a sight of that man in his craftiness, and I said to myself: What is he about now? A few months ago he was at the court of Spain; he has just returned from a visit to the court of Berlin; and in a few weeks he intends to go to Russia. *What is he about?* With that I got such a realization of war and horror as made my heart tremble. I rose at once and went into an inner room to turn God's eye upon the man who, I felt sure, was maturing selfish schemes that meant perfidy and bloodshed. I cried to God against him. When I rose from my knees the first verse I got from my book was in the 40th of Isaiah, 'Who bringeth the princes to nothing. He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea they shall not be planted; yea they shall not be sown; yea their stock shall not take root in the earth: and He shall blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.'

"The directness and fullness of the answer startled me. 'Now,' I said, 'I have Louis Napoleon under that, and all I have to do is to keep him there."

Mr. Neil Ross, in speaking of the circumstance, added a few interesting touches.

"In the times of war," he said, "Mr. Ross used to feel the bloodshed and wickedness and suffering very keenly. I had been a good deal with him during the time of the Crimean war, and the Indian mutiny, and American war. I knew how the news of these things troubled him.

"I was in Brucefield when the news came of the breaking out of the Franco-Prussian war. I met Mr. Ross on the street and he spoke to me about it, but he seemed so cheerful that I was surprised. I asked him how it was that he was in such good spirits.

"He replied, 'I am not afraid of Louis Napoleon. For many months I have had him under a text, and he cannot stir out of that. 'He shall be brought to nothing. The Lord shall blow upon him, and he shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take him away as stubble.' Now watch him. You will find that Louis Napoleon has lost his strength."

The utter and rapid collapse of the power and plans of the French Emperor which, during the few weeks following so perplexed and surprised the world, neither perplexed nor surprised Mr. Ross. With grim satisfaction he held him down under that text and watched him as he withered and was carried away out of his place like stubble.

Years later, when the news came in of the death of the young Prince Imperial, killed in Zululand by savages. Mr. Ross seemed much touched.

"My text has been fulfilled," he said, "to the bitter end. 'He has not been planted; yea, he has not been sown; yea, his stock has not taken root in the earth.' Not one word has failed."

One evening, a good many years afterwards, Mr. Ross had just received his *Globe*. It contained an intimation of the wholesale desecration of the Sabbath in

connection with the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. His spirit was stirred within him.

"That sort of work," he said, "*must* be visited from Heaven," and then he added with the emphasis of one announcing facts, not merely detailing probabilities. "It shall not be long until that very line shall carry soldiers, and army stores, and dead and wounded men, in vindication of God's broken Sabbath law."

It was only a few months until what he announced was literally fulfilled under the eyes of the whole Dominion during the Riel rebellion. But how few would connect the two things as he did! What are the national judgments that, on the same account, are ever since gathering up against us, higher and higher for every year that the patience of the Lord waits for repentance which does not come? How many strong young lives will be cut down like the grass of the field, because of the Sabbath desecration which howls unblushingly and continuously in the ears of legislators and Christian congregations, and yet awakens scarcely a whisper of opposition? Instead of opposition ministers and even missionaries have taken the Sabbath trains, and then announced in the public prints that they have done so, while church courts and church papers have looked on in silence, and issued no authoritative reprimand. Young men who were hopeful Sabbath scholars sell them tickets, and justify themselves in handing over their Sabbaths to a company, because these men in black coats and white neckties pay them for doing it. They can see no moral difference (and who can?) between the man who runs the Sabbath train and the man who takes it. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void Thy law."

A similar extract from a note-book bears date, Saturday, September 14th, 1872. "I see by the papers that the three Emperors are met in Berlin. Made the matter this morning a matter of prayer, lest their counsel should be to the injury of the peace of the world and to the hurt of the Lord's cause. Put in petitions for trans-

ferring the rule of the world to His own Son, to whom He has given the dominion over the whole earth." The significance of these petitions in Mr. Ross's mouth will be better understood when his views of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ shall have passed before the reader.

Some idea of his estimate of the power of prayer, and of the relation he saw between prayer and the written word, may be gained from the following passage from a sermon on the text, "Remember the word unto thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hope."

"Here is one who is face to face with God, pleading for the fulfilment of some word of promise on which his heart has leaned. See the strength of his position as he puts it before God, 'Remember the word,' that is, God's own word, we have strong ground even with an honorable man when we can say to him, 'Remember your word.' Then what is the strength of this position before the God who has 'magnified His word above all His name?' the God who counts unbelief the sorest affront that can be offered to Him, and who honors faith above every other virtue?

"But the position becomes stronger when we reflect that the word upon which this heart has rested is one that has been sent out of God on purpose that it might catch hopes. In grasping it and leaning all his weight upon it he is putting it to the very use for which it was sent out into the world. The drowning man who catches at the rope flung out to him puts it to its legitimate use, and has a right to expect responsive action from those who sent it to him in his peril. So the sinner in laying hold upon God's word and hoping upon it is doing with it exactly what God intended to be done, and has accordingly strong hold upon His faithfulness to fulfil the hopes that His word has raised, and that the word was meant to raise.

"But the position becomes stronger still. 'Remember thy word—upon which *thou hast caused me* to hope.' Not only is it God's own word that has been trusted, and a word of His that was meant to be trusted; it was further the putting forth of His own power that drew

the trembling heart out to grasp the word, to rest on it and to hope on it.

"Will the God of infinite faithfulness turn a deaf ear to the soul that comes with such a plea? 'Remember thy word—remember the word that was cast out on purpose to be trusted by just such helpless souls as mine—remember the word that thou thyself didst cause and enable me to trust.' Will God neglect that plea? What do you think of it? Will He fail to respond to such pleading as this?" (Then stretching out his arms over his head in a manner peculiar to himself, the preacher answered his own question) "It is ete-e-ernally im-poss-ible. Pleading soul, wrestling with God for the fulfilment of His own word, wrestle with a glad heart. You have an irresistible plea. God will 'magnify His *word* above all His name.'"

CHAPTER IX.

STUDIES AND RECREATIONS.

MR. ROSS was a student all his life. He did not leave his academic studies within the walls of the college. He found geometry particularly fascinating. Sometimes in later life he would spend the spare time of weeks in untiring application to the working out of deductions. He must have done the same in earlier years, judging from an account given of a journey from Brucefield to Kincardine made on horseback. Before starting he had been working at a deduction which so far had baffled him. Much of the time spent in his horse's company, as they went together through the leafy roads, where clearings were rather the exception than the rule, his mind was occupied with the conditions laid down for the working out of that problem, but he failed to command the position. Matters could not be left thus; so, during the homeward journey, his brain again laid siege to the fortress. While jogging along on his sturdy gray, going over the conditions given for the hundredth time, he got the key to the difficulty, and was as happy as one who has verily taken a city.

But the languages were his especial delight. Latin, Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, Syriac, German and Italian all engaged his attention in turn. There are also French books in his library that would indicate that it, too, had a share in his interest. He possessed an Arabic grammar, a small, thin volume, which cost him $11; and, a few months before his death, he bought a handsome new Greek lexicon, costing $12, because his old one was in such fine type that it taxed his eyes. A few

years earlier he had ordered a set of German text-books, and, after some preliminary study of the peculiarities of the language, he read Luther's New Testament with ever growing delight, from beginning to end. But it was Hebrew that roused the most enthusiasm and got the largest share of attention.

He committed many passages of the Hebrew Bible to memory, and his favorite time for doing so was while flying around the country behind a little black pony of his own rearing. This little animal, even to gray hairs, rejoiced in the juvenile name of "Coltie." It was the impression of some among his people that this same Coltie was often running away when his master was entirely oblivious of the fact, being absorbed in acquiring every jot and tittle of some favorite psalm, or in chanting one already learned in strains modulated according to the character of the poetry. It is quite as probable that, instead of being oblivious to Coltie's unnecessary speed, he was in sympathy with it, especially when following in song the dramatic magnificence of the 18th Psalm or some other of kindred character.

A peep at the Hebrew enthusiast is obtained in an incident kindly given by Dr. McDonald. They were driving in company as they often did, Dr. M. as usual, in front, Mr. Ross's horse following, and his master buried deep in his Hebrew Bible. They came to a toll-gate near Exeter, and expected to pass through it free, as ministers were entitled to do. But the toll-keeper was a stranger, and demanded of the foremost traveller his certificate. Both ministers, being very well known for miles around, had become careless about carrying their certificates, and neither of them had any to show. Mr. Ross being behind, but understanding there was difficulty, jumped out of his cutter, Bible in hand, and asked what was the matter. "The gate-keeper wants our certificates," replied his brother minister. "*Here* is my certificate," was the prompt response, holding his open Hebrew Bible up in the man's view. Whether it was the book, or the tone, or the attitude that produced the impression, history does not state; but the keeper

made no further objection, and the two ministers passed on.

He was quite as ready to use his knowledge of Hebrew to testify for Christ as his knowledge of Gaelic. "On one occasion in Montreal," writes a friend, "he entered a Jewish Synagogue and met the venerable and learned Rabbi. After some general conversation he took advantage of the opportunity, being instant in season and out of season, to treat his new acquaintance to several instructive pieces of Hebrew exegesis in Isaiah and the Psalms of David, citing passages in the original, and dwelling forcibly on the Messianic utterances of the several writers."

He also made excellent use of his linguistic ability in drawing to himself a small class of young school teachers, to whom he gave weekly lessons, first in Hebrew, then in Latin, and afterwards in Greek. There were only two of them at the beginning, and they, after mastering the preliminaries, read through the Pentateuch, took parts of other books, and committed a psalm or two to memory. When they commenced the Latin, two or three others joined the class. They went through the whole of Cæsar, parts of Virgil, Horace and Cornelius Nepos. They next studied Greek. But the class began to get smaller. One promising young man named David Stoddard died, and another moved to a distance. They did not go far with this language, but mastered the grammar sufficiently to read a little of the New Testament. For the greater part of ten years they met steadily at the manse every Friday evening when Mr. Ross was at home.

This class was a source of much pleasure and benefit to him. He enjoyed meeting with young people when there was some healthful common bond of fellowship. The enthusiasm and progress of his volunteer scholars were calculated to give satisfaction to any teacher. Then the opportunity it gave him, after the lesson was finished, to talk over Bible subjects in which he was interested, and in which he wished to interest them, was sometimes strikingly employed.

He called one day at the house of one of these young men, and found him studying in his Hebrew Bible the second chapter of Daniel where Nebuchadnezzar is about to slay the wise men of Babylon because of their inability to repeat to him his forgotten dream.

Mr. Ross listened with interest to the reader as he worked out the narrative from the Hebrew story, and the "great image," with head of gold and toes part of iron and part of clay, stood slowly but distinctly out before them.

While listening, a thought flashed across Mr. Ross's mind, and he gave it forth in all its freshness as soon as the reader came to a pause.

"Robert," he said, "you are a teacher. What would you think if you were to enter a room where a class was undergoing review in universal history, and you saw the teacher go up to the board and give the following lesson?

"'Children, I am going to give you a diagram which will enable you to carry away a complete outline of the history of the civilized world down to our own times.'

"Then he drew the figure of a man on the board, marking it off by lines across the neck, below the breast and at the knees, so dividing it into four parts, and said, pointing to the head of his figure:

"'Remember, this head, which we shall call gold, represents the first great monarchy of which history takes much account; that is, the Babylonian.

"'Below the head you have the two arms uniting with the trunk. This second division of our image you may think of as glittering silver. The right arm will stand for Persia, led by Cyrus, and the left for Media under Darius. The two unite to overthrow the Babylonian power, and together form this solid silver breast, which we shall call the Medo-Persian Empire, and which, for nearly two hundred years, swayed the sceptre it had wrested from the hands of Babylon.

"'This third portion of our image you see begins with the remaining part of the solid trunk, and then

divides into the two thighs. Think of it as fiery, burnished brass. In this solid part we have Alexander the Great, who, at the head of his small Greek army, completely subdued and superseded the colossal Medo-Persian Empire. With the death of Alexander the united empire of Greece ends, but Greek dominion continues, especially in the two most important of the four parts into which it was divided. In the two thighs we see the kingdoms of Syria and Egypt. This brazen third division shall stand for the great, all-conquering power of Greece, strong at first under Alexander, but divided through the greater part of its time.

"'Last we have the strong, sinewy legs. We shall regard them as made of iron, the most cruel of all the metals. These iron legs shall stand for the Roman power, which swept the civilized world and pushed its roads and its iron sway far out into hitherto barbarous regions. As there are two legs, the Roman Empire had two capitals, Rome and Constantinople, each the metropolis of its own division of the empire.

"'But we are not done yet. Do you see these ten toes into which the iron legs finally subdivide? These shall stand for the modern kingdoms into which the Empire of Rome is now divided. Though their number has not at all times been the same, yet they are often spoken of as the ten European Kingdoms. These are not iron like the legs, but partly iron and partly clay. There is Roman strength throughout them all, but seriously mixed with base and weakening elements.'

"'Robert, if you heard a teacher so summarize the facts and divisions of universal history, and saw him so set them out before the very eyes and imaginations of his pupils, would you not say that he was a *master of his subject?*'

The young man was too intelligent a teacher to refrain from a hearty affirmative to this question.

"And yet," Mr. Ross continued, "all this is done in the Word of God *before the history itself had an existence*, while the world was but newly resting under that initial dynasty. What hand *could* have drawn that 'great

image' in the Book of Daniel but the hand of Him who 'sees the end from the beginning?'"

The argument was conclusive to one capable of appreciating the thoroughness of the knowledge necessary for such a masterly synopsis.

The same idea was afterwards given to his people from the pulpit. Many years later a member of the congregation told the writer that the "great image" in Daniel, as a demonstration of the Divine inspiration of Scripture had taken a strong hold upon her reason. "Sometimes," she said, "I have been distressed with infidel thoughts. How can I be sure that the Bible is the word of God after all? When these thoughts have come, the 'great image' in Daniel has given me a conclusive argument when I was too weak to find another. How could any but the all-seeing God Himself have so foretold the history of the world down to our own times? If God speaks in Daniel, He speaks in all the rest."

Another characteristic little incident has been preserved in connection with these memory lessons. It was at one of the ordinary meetings on Friday evening, and during the Hebrew period. The young man who had been found reading Nebuchadnezzar's dream was now going over part of the week's lesson. He mispronounced a word. Mr. Ross corrected him. He slowly pronounced it again, giving each letter and mark its full value; but he was still wrong.

"Robert," said his teacher, "you read it as if there were a daghesh there. Now you see there is no daghesh."

"But, Mr. Ross, there *is* a daghesh," replied the scholar emphatically, "and that is why I pronounced it as I did."

The teacher, positive that a daghesh in the circumstances could not be there, looked over his shoulder at the page. Sure enough, there was the daghesh, looking up in all its black littleness into the face of the man who knew that no daghesh had a right to be there. There was a moment's pause, and then, with infinite amusement shining out of his eyes, he blew upon the page. Behold! Robert's daghesh was lifted on the wings of

that wind, and was seen no more. Those who enjoy parables may easily find one here.

It will readily be understood by those who have thought intelligently upon the nature and limitations of mind, that one given to such absorbed concentration as was common with Mr. Ross, must have times of relaxation. Actual recreation of some sort was as necessary to him as his daily bread. His studies in the languages were taken up rather as recreation than as work, but it was quite common with him to throw aside all forms of intellectual toil, and simply relax. His sources of amusement were as numerous as the objects and subjects of which the world is full. He seemed to have the power of finding interest in anything that might happen to catch his attention. But very often there was some special line to which, for the time, he devoted all his leisure hours.

In his early ministerial life he became quite an enthusiast about bees. He watched them, studied them, and handled them, with an ever-deepening interest. His friend Dr. McDonald kept bees also, and he has related an experience which they had together.

"One time I had a hive which was not working right. I could not tell what was the matter. The bees would come out and hang around the front of the hive, and do nothing. I thought if anybody could tell what was the matter Mr. Ross could. I drove down to Brucefield for him, and without any coaxing he was ready in a moment and was with me. He sat down in front of the hive for about ten minutes. Then he said, 'They have no queen, and they will not work without one.' To get a queen for that hive Mr. Ross regarded as a right and proper thing to do, so we got our kit together and set off. It did not take us long to locate a tree in Stanley in which there were wild bees. We soon cut it down, and it broke just where the hive had its honey, and some of the bees got into the mud that was under the tree. In a moment Mr. Ross had his handkerchief out and spread over the mud; some mud and some bees were rolled up in it and we were off for

Clinton in a great hurry. The handkerchief was carefully opened on my study table. The queen was there, but apparently dead. There were six other bees with the queen. Two of them first cleaned the royal body of the mud. Then two others fixed the scales of her body. The next two did something else to her, but we could not tell what. When they had finished the queen got up and shook herself. Mr. Ross grabbed her and put her into the hive, and what a delighted man he was when he saw the bees quieting down and going to work at once."

The same kind friend continues : "For a long time Mr. Ross devoted a great deal of time to studying the nature of the vine, and applying the knowledge he gathered to the raising of grapes. He was very generous with the fruit when he succeeded in having a good crop. Every year as the time of grape-gathering drew near he used to invite his clerical brethren to Brucefield, and such of them as were able to accept the invitation spent a day that lived as a refreshing memory long afterwards. Mr. Ross was as pleased as the rest of us when he saw how we relished his grapes.

"On one occasion he was coming to Clinton to give me his annual invitation, and to prove that the grapes were ready he picked a large basketful of the best and started. But on the way he met some boys and some friends. They were allowed to eat the grapes, but the stems they were requested to put back into the basket. When he reached the Clinton manse, he had a basket full of stems, but not a grape. 'Here,' he said, 'you can see my good intentions when I left home, and you can imagine what a feast you would have had if I had been able to carry them out.'

"Mr. Ross was an enthusiast, only the word of God regulated his enthusiasm. Anything which was of a social, mirthful nature, and which the Bible did not condemn, would engage his whole energy as much as matters of more serious importance.

"One evening he and Dr. Ure met in my house in Clinton. He had spent the day studying his Greek and

Hebrew Bible, and Dr. Ure had been engaged for hours in learning the Gaelic, so as to be of use to his Gaelic parishioners. After tea we proposed a lighter exercise, and proceeded to play a game. Mr. Ross became as usual absorbed. The same concentration of heart and mind which he had exercised all day was continued now only in another direction. His enthusiasm inspired Dr. Ure and myself, and we were brought to consciousness of what we were doing only by seeing the morning light come streaming in at the windows.

"Some may conclude that Mr. Ross was a dreamer and not a practical man. Those persons would have learned their mistake if they could have watched Mr. Ross and Mr. John Kay, then of Galt, now of Detroit, making the first breakfast ever made in the Clinton manse. Mr. Kay boasted that few could make better toast than himself, but Mr. Ross declared he could make a better cup of tea than any woman he ever saw. The writer has had many a cup of tea of his brewing, and can aver that it had always three good qualities, it was hot, it was black and it was strong. Jokingly he used to say that he never allowed his sister who was keeping house for him to see the leaves that remained in the pot after he was done."

A constant source of amusement for years was the little black "Coltie" mentioned already. One of his earlier experiences with this spirited and somewhat indulged young animal is thus graphically described by an eye-witness.

"One day, going up from Thames Road to Clinton to attend a meeting of Presbytery, I called to see if Mr. Ross was going, and found him at the stable when I drove up, harnessing 'Coltie' and making ready to start.

"This 'Coltie' was a young horse of his own raising and training, and a most wayward, intractable brute he was, but a constant source of amusement and entertainment to Mr. Ross, who would tell with great delight the scurvy tricks the ill-trained animal would play him.

"Having got the cutter out, and all into it that he wanted to take with him, he was ready to put the horse into the shafts. Every preparation had to be made before he was attached to the cutter, because he had not been trained to wait his master's pleasure as to starting, but claimed the privilege of starting exactly when it suited himself, whether his master was ready or not. Mr. Ross met wilfulness with discretion, and got everything ready beforehand. Of course it never occurred to him to compel 'Coltie' to wait his master's pleasure.

"All being ready, Mr. Ross proposed that we should go in and have prayer before we started, and that 'Coltie' might eat with comfort while we prayed he removed the bit from his mouth. This was altogether unnecessary, as the little animal was rolling fat, and did not know what hunger meant.

"Having had prayer we came out. I got my horse ready, and Mr. Ross brought 'Coltie' out and put him in the shafts. Having fastened the last strap, he watched his chance, nimbly sprang into the cutter, and grabbed the reins. 'Coltie' was off in a moment like a shot out of a shovel. I was afraid the cutter would be wrecked on the gate-post, but it escaped, and 'Coltie' reached the road. The snow was badly drifted, and the pitch-holes were many and deep, so that fast driving was out of the question. But 'Coltie' was in a hurry that morning, and continued up the road on the gallop. I followed as fast as I dared, expecting every moment to see Mr. Ross land on his head in a snowbank. But with admirable skill and courage he stuck to the ship in a very rough sea. 'Coltie' continued on the full run till he reached the village fully a mile away, and pulled up of his own accord at the Post Office, his usual stopping-place.

"Some men came out and asked Mr. Ross what was his hurry. He explained that he had never seen 'Coltie' so headstrong and hard-mouthed. 'I tugged and pulled at him,' he said, 'with all my might; I talked and scolded and stormed, but he paid no attention at all.'

"'No wonder,' cried a bystander; 'look here.' And sure enough there was the bit, away back under 'Coltie's' chin, Mr. Ross having forgotten to put it in his mouth again before we started.

"Then Mr. Ross took out his Bible, and read as it opened to him, in Psalms xxxii., 9: 'Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come nigh unto thee.'"

It has been with some hesitation that the last little paragraph has been inserted. To those unacquainted with Mr. Ross and his habit of keeping in touch with the word of God at every step, the transition from the comical to the scripture text is almost too sharp. But the picture it contains is drawn from life, and is too illustrative to be omitted. In thus aptly meeting the most trivial events of his daily life with a word out of His own book, God seems to have been training him to watch for and understand the special messages he was to receive and deliver in more serious circumstances.

Coltie was quite a character; and as he was, for the last twenty years intimately associated with Mr. Ross and much of his work, it may not be out of place to give a few more recollections concerning him.

The name of Coltie's mother was Kate. For some years the two inhabited, not only the same stable but the same stall, Mr. Ross counting first upon the maternal love of the older animal as a guarantee for fair play, and upon the filial instincts of the younger as a like guarantee, when Coltie had grown big enough to take care of himself. Coltie never laid any complaints concerning his mother's selfishness; but after a while Mr. Ross began to realize that something was wrong with Kate. With a glimmer of suspicion that Coltie's filial instincts might not be proving an adequate safeguard in the matter of eatables, he thought he would play detective and see how the young animal was behaving. He fed both horses and shut up the stable as usual, taking the precaution to have an eye-hole ready for use after the door was closed. His respect for Coltie and his filial instincts

sensibly fell when he saw him promptly place himself cornerwise in front of his own box of fodder, and boldly insert his nose into his mother's. She, poor animal, too well trained to the inevitable to resist, or to attempt reciprocity in the matter, simply stood back until he had eaten what he wanted of her portion, and had to be content with gathering up what he had left, while he was luxuriating in his own still overflowing supply. Coltie had to learn after that that loss of liberty is the result of refusal to be guided by proper principle, for he lost his old place in the large stall, and had to submit to a halter besides.

There are seven miles between the old Brucefield manse and the Bayfield Road church, where Mr. Chiniquy was advertised to lecture. Mr. Ross drove him over. It was a bitterly cold day, and the Frenchman's blood was somewhat chilled by the time they reached my father's door. He drew up to the fire, rubbed his hands before it, exclaiming against the long cold drive. Mr. Ross was walking up and down the room, eyeing Mr. Chiniquy with fun lurking in every feature of his face. Then he turned to my father, as if to defend himself from implied reproaches.

"Mr. Duncan," he said, "I have an old horse and a young one. Before we left home I asked Mr. Chiniquy which of the two I should take. I told him that if he chose the young one I would undertake that he should have a fast drive, in which he would have no time to feel cold, only that I could not, in that case, quite guarantee his bones. But if he preferred the old one I would guarantee a perfectly safe ride, not a shadow of risk to his bones, only it would certainly be very slow. Now, he chose the old horse, and of course he has had a long, slow drive. But that is not my fault. I gave him his choice."

Coltie was not the only creature that afforded him hearty and healthful amusement. Cats and dogs, hens and turtle-doves, tame rabbits and wild squirrels were all interesting in their turn. He made persistent efforts one summer to cultivate the acquaintance of an alert

red squirrel that played around and about the manse, bold yet exceedingly watchful. His first step was to lead him, by trains of corn judiciously laid, to venture into the study. This was done first while Mr. Ross was out, but before long the bright-eyed little visitor would cautiously enter even when he was present. With one eye ever fixed on the silent man seemingly absorbed in his book, he would pick up the nearest grain, pack it into his cheek, and, measuring the distance to the next, as well as the distance between himself and the door, he would cautiously make for it, ever ready, upon the slightest movement to dart back and disappear. The little fellow was finally outwitted on this point by a judicious use of a broom, by means of which the door was suddenly shut while Mr. Ross still kept his seat. No unfair use was made of this advantage, however, and after a while the little prisoner was allowed to go out. So, bit by bit, the acquaintance grew, until there was a sudden and complete cessation of its visits. Mr. Ross always feared that its increase of confidence had led to its destruction, not from perfidy on his part, but on the part of the family cat, which, treacherously oblivious of the white flag that had been held out to the little visitor, had in all probability put a sudden and complete termination to the interesting negotiations.

On one occasion even a poor, half-starved mouse was not beneath his tender ministrations. He had been preaching for my father. At the close of the service he did not come down till the people were nearly all away, and then he had something lying on the back of his hand which seemed to be regarded with considerable interest. It was a poor, half-grown mouse, and he was stroking its shiny little back with one finger.

"It is a church mouse," he said, "and you know they are never very well off."

After holding it a little in his hand and letting it feel the warmth of the summer sun, he laid it down on the corner stone of the church which was quite warm to the touch from the sunshine.

That same afternoon, after he had bidden us good-

bye and was just passing out of the door, a well-grown kitten which was a household pet, walked boldly past him. He at once stooped down and caught Biddy by a front paw. The kitten objected, but that did not matter.

"Kitty must dance," he said, and commenced to assist her, by means of the paw which he held, to what would have been quite a well-conducted dance had poor Biddy resigned herself meekly to her part of the performance. After teasing kitty and children too for a few seconds, for no such liberties had ever been taken with that aristocratic tortoise shell cat before, he dropped her paw saying, "Ah, Kitty, you are not well trained, I see." Then looking up at the circle around him, he added:

"You should see my dog and cat at home. They know how to dance. But the dog likes the dancing better than Kitty does."

His own saying about himself, "I was an old man when I was a boy, and now I am a boy when I am an old man," was illustrated in multitudes of ways. A game of croquet, checkers or chess would win his delighted interest as if he were indeed a boy—or even a child's puzzle with a slate and pencil. There was a word game played by the young people, in which he was particularly enthusiastic and successful. From a number of random letters scattered on the table a word was to be manufactured in thirty seconds, each player having the chance in turn. The one who first could show a list of ten words won the game. Where the most of the fun was found was in capturing, or, as it was usually termed, "stealing," words from a dangerously successful rival. Any word in an enemy's list could be taken from him if, by adding one letter or more and possibly rearranging, a new word could be formed. Plurals did not count. On one occasion a rival player was rejoicing in having put together the rather uncommon word, lemon. He was imprudently guilty of obstreperous rejoicing because of its supposed safety, from the impossibility of transforming it into any other word. But at the next turn the rejoicing was turned

into groans. By simply adding the letter *s* and rearranging, Mr. Ross demanded *lemon* that it might appear in his own list as, in the circumstances, the rather incongruous word *solemn*.

There was a light-heartedness and a whole-heartedness about his merriment that meant a heart at peace and a mind at ease, elements signally lacking in much of the merry-making of this sin-burdened and care-burdened world. There was as much difference between Mr. Ross's laugh and the noisy jocularity that usually goes by the name of "fun," as between the "merry heart that doeth good like a medicine" and the "crackling of thorns under a pot."

And yet this is the man of whom it has been written: "My youthful remembrance of him is the deep solemnity of countenance with which he used to come up the aisle, hat in hand, and ascend the pulpit steps. He usually came on foot those days, but turned not to right or to left to speak to any before the service. After that was over he would shake hands and perhaps speak with any whom he might meet. His silent hand-shake always left a serious impression on my young mind. I somehow felt that he was praying."

CHAPTER X.

THE UNION OF 1875.

THE history of the Church formed by the union of 1861 is one of incessant activity. New colleges were founded and the old more thoroughly equipped. The work of Home Missions was taken hold of with something of the grasp of the statesman. French Evangelization began to be regarded by the united Church as another weighty responsibility, and shouldered as such, while God showed His approval of their offered service by giving them more work of this sort than they had intended in laying the Kankakee Mission upon their care. With the offer and acceptance of George L. Mackay (now Dr. Mackay, of Formosa) to be their first agent in the strictly foreign field, was commenced the most pronounced response to Christ's parting word of command, "Go ye into all the world." In all this forward movement Mr. Ross took a deep interest and an active part.

When Mr. Chiniquy, of Kankakee, applied to be taken under the care of the Canada Presbyterian Church, some of the Canadian brethren seemed to be a little afraid of such an ally. Though sympathizing with him in his war with Rome, they felt somewhat uneasy at the possible financial demands that might result from too close connection with one in mortal combat with so mighty and unscrupulous a foe as the Man of Sin. Someone proposed that he should be admitted into ecclesiastical fellowship, and so given the sanction of their authority and the benefit of their counsel, but that only on the condition that he should expect *no financial support.* The motion, though not finally

carried, was strongly and somewhat pertinaciously supported. Mr. Chiniquy, knowing the situation better than any uninitiated Protestant could know it, naturally felt the reverse of cheerful at the prospect of ecclesiastical connection limited by such a stipulation. Mr. Ross crossed the room and shook hands with him.

"Mr. Chiniquy," he said, "they are talking of doing what they cannot do. I ask you now to come to Brucefield any time you will and tell my people about your work, and they can give you as much money as they like, and any minister here who sympathizes with you has a right to give you a like invitation."

It was a hearty word when a hearty word was needed. Though the proposed restriction was not laid upon him, Mr. Chiniquy was not slow in availing himself of the invitation given.

When George L. Mackay spent a few months previous to his first departure visiting some of the congregations seeking to interest them in the new mission to China, Brucefield presented to him a cordially opened door. Mr. Ross was much interested in the young missionary, and afterwards stated the impression he then received in one significant sentence:

"I formed a favorable opinion of his fitness for the work from one special feature. He did not seem to be conscious of any self-sacrifice in devoting himself to the work nor feel that he was doing anything great." That this sentence might be more clearly understood the writer has felt tempted to elaborate it a little—not adding, only developing. But it is probably better to give the words just as they were uttered, leaving it to those whom they may concern to weigh them for themselves. They may prove a light in a dark place to some young Christian seeking to decide as to his fitness for the foreign field. This is a serious matter. Along with the prayer that fitted laborers should be sent out into the field, there surely should be the almost equally important prayer that unfit laborers may be kept back. One keenly conscious of self-sacrifice has scarcely closed heartily with a Royal call. To such an one, the sacrifice would be to stay at home.

Though deeply interested in all forms of the Church's work, from the year 1870, there was another subject which demanded from Mr. Ross a deeper interest still. At that time a proposal was seriously made to seek some basis on which the four great Presbyterian Churches of the Dominion could unite into one grand body. There were, as it will be remembered, two divisions in Ontario—the Canada Presbyterian Church and the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland. There were two more in the Lower Provinces that corresponded with these almost perfectly in history and attitude, viz., the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces and the Synod of the Maritime Provinces in connection with the Church of Scotland. After the experience preceding the union of 1861, Mr. Ross utterly disapproved of any attempt to form a basis for the union of these four Churches, for it could be done only by dropping out completely any hearty testimony to the Headship of Jesus Christ. As he anticipated, the proposals made were practically these. From the Synods in connection with the Church of Scotland to the other two :

"If you will drop out of your basis any explicit mention of the Headship of Christ over His Church, we will drop our connection with the Church of Scotland." Or, what is nearer the truth, for the proposal came rather from what we may call the hitherto testifying Churches :

"If you will drop your connection with the Church of Scotland, we will drop all special testimony to the Kingship of our King."

In the new basis proposed, the old 3rd article, containing the hearty testimony of both the uniting Churches to the Headship of Christ over the Church, was dropped out altogether, as it was distasteful to the Synods in connection with the Church of Scotland, and the old 4th article, containing a real though sadly modified testimony to the Headship of Christ over the nations, shared the same fate; it, too, disappeared

altogether. What could the Free Church have meant by haggling over that article for sixteen years before the first union, and then, seemingly without even a motive, dropping it out completely?

During the first years of the negotiations, there was a strong party of old Free Churchmen, who could not consider it their duty, to gain any object whatever, to drop all explicit testimony to the Headship of Jesus Christ over His Church. They could not at first forget that that was the very banner around which their Church in the day of her espousals had been gathered, and that to maintain it she had felt herself summoned to assume a separate existence. They were troubled also at the entire blotting out of the 4th article, and with it all testimony to the Headship of Christ over the nations. But when at last a parenthetical clause speaking of Christ as "Head of the Church, and Head over all things to the Church" was inserted in the preamble to the basis, nearly all either expressed themselves as reasonably satisfied or made up their minds to leave their dissatisfaction unexpressed.

But Mr. Ross was not satisfied. Dearly as he loved unity, and a proper massing of Christ's forces for the gaining of His ends, the King and His Kingship were infinitely more in his eyes than any apparently important strategic advantages.

It was during the summer of 1874 that the writer was privileged to become a sharer of his home life. As his mind at the time was often occupied with the proposed union and the basis upon which it was to be formed, the early recollections of the time we spent together are full of eager discussions of the subject.

"What are the distinguishing characteristics of the three reformations—that of Germany, Geneva, and Scotland?" he asked one day, pausing in his walk up and down the room.

It was absolutely necessary to confess ignorance, and, considering the animated countenance with which the question had been put, it was rather agreeable to require enlightenment.

"In Germany," he answered, Christ was lifted up as Priest, in Geneva as Prophet, and in Scotland as KING. *That* is the glory of Scotland. She has not only believed in Jesus Christ as the all-sufficient Sacrifice and Advocate for each individual soul, nor rested in Him merely as the all-sufficient Instructor, revealing the whole will of God for ecclesiastical as well as individual guidance, but besides these two she has had a fuller revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ: she has seen Him as her KING. Germany struck the key-note of the Reformation, and preached faith, faith in the adequate work of the Great High Priest. Geneva added to the faith of Germany the knowledge that comes from careful attention to the instructions of the 'Prophet like unto Moses.' But Scotland added to the faith of the one and the knowledge of the other, *loyalty* to a personal and glorious *King*. Hers was a mighty step in advance."

The idea was new to me, and delightfully significant. It seemed, and it was, an opening door into treasuries of hope and power.

That the following conversations may be intelligible to the ordinary reader it seems necessary to give in full the basis and preamble which they discuss:

PREAMBLE AND BASIS OF UNION.

Preamble: The Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland, the Canada Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces, and the Presbyterian Church of the Maritime Provinces in connection with the Church of Scotland, holding the same doctrine, government and discipline, believing that it would be for the glory of God and the advancement of the cause of Christ, that they should unite and thus form one Presbyterian Church in the Dominion, to be called the "Presbyterian Church in Canada," independent of all other churches in its jurisdiction, and under authority to Christ alone, the Head of the Church, and Head over all things to the Church, agree to unite on the following basis, to be subscribed by the moderators of the respective Churches in their name and in their behalf.

Basis: I. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, being the word of God, are the only infallible rule of faith and manners.

II. The Westminster Confession of Faith shall form the subordinate standard of this Church; the Larger and Shorter Catechisms shall be adopted by the Church, and appointed to be used for the instruction of the people, it being distinctly understood that nothing contained in the aforesaid Confession or Catechisms regarding the power and duty of the Civil Magistrate, shall be held to sanction any principles or views inconsistent with full liberty of conscience in matters of religion.

III. The government and worship of this church shall be in accordance with the recognized principles and practice of Presbyterian churches, as laid down generally in the Form of "Presbyterian Church Government" and "The Directory of the Public Worship of God."

Along with the Basis there are seven "Accompanying Resolutions," which scarcely need to be given in full, though with the second, touching modes of worship, Mr. Ross was entirely dissatisfied, seeing it sanctions all "practices presently followed by congregations." These seven resolutions are concerning

I. Relations to other churches.

II. Modes of worship.

III. Fund for widows and orphans of ministers.

IV. Collegiate institutions.

V. Legislation with regard to rights of property.

VI. Home and foreign missionary operations.

VII. Government grants to denominational colleges.

That the reader may be able intelligently to enjoy the conversations that follow, he should now turn back to the basis of '61 given in Chapter VI. Let him read carefully the third article of that old basis, realize its importance in view of historical facts, and then see if he can find it or any substitute for it in the new. Next let him study the fourth article, and remember the importance that was attached to it before the first union, and the sixteen years delay it occasioned, and then let him see if he can find any vestige of it left in the new docu-

ment. Having ascertained for himself what is omitted in the present basis, he will be able to follow with more interest the discussions in connection.

On one occasion Mr. F., a dear friend from a distance, was spending a few hours with us. He strongly approved of the union, had evidently paid little attention to the difficulties which lay in its way or the manner in which they had been overcome, but gave it as his opinion that the basis was "all right."

"Granting in the meantime," said Mr. Ross, "that it is all right in what it contains, will you, an old Free Churchman, say it is 'all right' in what it omits?"

Mr. F., being a Scotchman, did not give a decided answer.

"The Pharisees paid tithes of mint and anise and cummin. *All right!* Jesus did not fault them for doing so. But they omitted the weightier matters. Even though everything in the basis is 'all right,' that does not prove that these right things are not mere mint and anise and cummin alongside of the 'weightier matters' that are still left out."

"What do you consider the weightier matters?" replied Mr. F., presently.

"They have put in the Bible after a fashion, the Westminster Confession and the Presbyterian Form of Church Government. All very good. But they have left out the *King!* And they have done so, not by accident, but to gain an end; they have done so because they could not secure the union without it; they have done so because any special mention of Him was distasteful to some of the parties that were to be conciliated. Mr. F., how does it look?"

The champion for the basis did not seem to feel entirely comfortable, but intimated the impossibility of putting everything into a document of that sort.

"Mr. F.," replied Mr. Ross with great emphasis, "they cannot put everything in, but they need not put the most important of all matters out. You must remember that special testimony to Jesus Christ as *King* was the very essence of our existence as the Free

Church. To this end were we born, and for this cause came we, as a church, into the world, that *we* might *bear witness* unto *the truth*, and to this transcendent truth, the kingship of our King. The world had no need of the Free Church except to vindicate that truth that had been trampled under foot. The 3rd Article of the old basis has continued that unequivocal testimony as regards His Headship over the Church, since the first union. But it is now put out of the basis altogether, and put out to please those who positively and with reason dislike any such special testimony. How does it look? You do not tell me," with some amusement, "that it is in the preamble. No, I think you are as wise not to plead that. Some of us feel that there might be more respect to the King in leaving Him out altogether than in merely furnishing Him a corner in the porch."

"You are looking at it one way," replied Mr. F., "and I am looking at it in another. I cannot make that seem right as you have explained it. But this is what I look at. Christ prayed for unity among His people. The divisions of the Protestant Church are a blot upon her character and a hindrance to her work. Whether I can see my way around your objections or not, I am glad of the union."

"But will the union so formed constitute the sort of oneness for which Christ prayed? '*To Him* shall the gathering of the people be.' *That* is the union that shall have power and blessing in it. 'That they may be one *in us*.' *That* is the oneness Christ prayed for. But the principle upon which this union is formed is entirely different. In order to its possibility there must be a little dishonor to Christ as King. You may make out that dishonor as small as you like. We will not quarrel about its size. You can scarcely avoid acknowledging that there is a little dishonor when the mention of His Headship has to be put out of the basis to please one party, and yet must be inserted in a preamble to soothe the consciences of another. Now, if a great union is to be formed by means of a little dishonor to Jesus Christ,

what may you infer as to the character of the union? It is not the one seen through the mists of ages by Jacob's dying eyes. '*To Him*' was that gathering. Can it be that such a plan was ever formed in Heaven? Do you think the planning of ever so little dishonor to Christ was ever done in Heaven?"

Springing to his feet as he became more eager in his argument, he commenced walking as he talked.

"Let me illustrate," he continued. "Let us suppose that every tree in the forest was so made by God that it showed the name of the Lord Jesus Christ shining in one spot through its bark. Suppose a proposal was made to form a grand union of all Christ's followers throughout the world, and that the only thing necessary to its consummation was that all should consent to have that name publicly struck off the trunk of one small tree. Just think of it! The benefit so immense! The dishonor done to Christ so utterly trivial! But let me ask you. Could a plan to do *any* dishonor to Jesus Christ originate in Heaven? That small dishonor indicates that the whole plan originated down below, and that the supposed benefits were necessarily a mere delusion.

"The thing is illustrated before our eyes in Satan's closing temptation. He had formed a magnificent plan of uniting all the kingdoms of the world under Jesus Christ as King. All that was necessary to bring the matter to a successful issue was that Jesus should be willing to do one small act of homage to himself. This was Satan's plan, and a much shorter and easier way of getting possession of the kingdoms of the world than God's way has been. It is much easier in a world of sin and disloyalty to gather even Christians together by bringing Christ down than by lifting Him up. But the union that will yet win the conquest of the world will be formed by lifting Him up, as now lawfully wielding the Sceptre that was not to depart from Judah till He came, and *to Him* shall the gathering of the people be. And those so gathered shall have power to conquer this world for their Lord."

"Then you look for no benefit whatever from the uniting of these four Churches?"

"I did not say that," said Mr. Ross almost sharply. "It is a strange thing out of which God will not bring good. The devil planned the crucifixion of Christ, and it was wicked hands that worked out the plan; but that has been made the fountain of blessing for the world. The devil planned it, but God had planned it long before he did. In a similar way the father of lies is playing an important part in these union negotiations, and he is deceiving some good men into doing his work in the matter. But he will not overreach God by such means. By his very success he is working out a plan that lay in the mind of the Eternal before he was created. He who knows how to bring good out of evil will overrule the arrangements of the prince of darkness to accomplish His own gracious purposes. Yet He will remember the sin that attaches to His own, and He will visit it. The evil leaven will work, and His own people will find themselves at a disadvantage. When the Lord next arises to carry His work conspicuously forward, He will find this Church unfit for His purposes, and will have to use another. Or, more probably, finding all the old bottles unfit for further service, He will do as he has often had to do before, provide new bottles for the new wine, and let the old ones go to decay."

On another occasion, in giving his views on the entire omission in the new basis of the old 4th Article, he expressed himself somewhat as follows:

"As to Christ's headship over the nations—who can find it in this second basis at all? Was the Free Church honest in setting such store by the doctrine previous to the first union, that they have, seemingly without an object, given up all testimony to it now? And worse than that—the only sentence in the basis that bears upon the doctrine is one which so modifies the Confession of Faith that no statement therein contained bearing on this subject has any longer a definite meaning. 'It being distinctly understood,' so runs the second article of the new basis, 'that nothing contained in the aforesaid Confession or Catechisms regarding the power or duty of the civil magistrate shall be held to sanction

any principles or views inconsistent with full liberty of conscience in matters of religion.' This sentence sounds well, but it may be puzzling to the unitiated to find out why it was put there. The Confession itself affirms liberty of conscience in a most beautiful and scriptural way, Chapter xx., section 2nd, and it must be a strange document if anything it says about the civil magistrate or anything else is inconsistent with itself. But the significance of this sentence may be understood by considering, first, what it does, and second, an illustration or two. See first, what it does. It sets up a principle acknowledged by all, 'Liberty of conscience,' but sets it up in such a way that it is to strike out of the Confession anything that may be, or may be supposed to be, inconsistent with it. Now take an illustration. The principle of the *love of God* is acknowledged by all who adhere to the Confession of Faith. But if you set up this principle in such a way as to strike out of the Confession *whatever any one may choose to consider* inconsistent with it, see what an open door you have for all the Universalists in the land. 'It being distinctly understood that nothing contained in the aforesaid Confession or Catechisms concerning the eternity of future punishment shall be held to sanction any principles or views inconsistent with the *love of God*.' Would not that sentence inserted in the basis be quite sufficient to enable Universalists heartily to join in union with Presbyterians? To those who understand something of the awful nature of sin, or of the essential justice and holiness of God, as well as of His love, nothing said in the Confession concerning the eternity of future punishment is inconsistent with their idea of the love of God. But to the Universalist, every statement that even looks toward eternal suffering for any one is inconsistent with his ideas of the love of God, but the sentence given above strikes out to him every such statement. Take again the principle laid down in the fifth question of the Shorter Catechism, 'Are there more Gods than one? *There is but one only, the living and true God*.' We hold the principle of the unity of God as truly as the Unitari-

ans. But if we set up this principle so as to strike out anything that may be supposed to be inconsistent with it, would a Unitarian ask more? 'It being distinctly understood that nothing contained in the aforesaid Confession or Catechisms concerning the Trinity or the office of the Holy Ghost, or the person of Jesus Christ, shall be held to sanction any principles or views inconsistent with the *unity of God*.' The Confession so modified would not have one authoritative statement concerning the Trinity or the office of the Spirit or the Divinity of Jesus Christ. And the Confession modified as it is by that sentence in the basis has not one authoritative statement concerning the Headship of Christ over the nations. Up to the year 1861 the Confession was not thought explicit enough or strong enough as testimony to this doctrine, so the 4th Article was placed in the basis and persistently kept there, to the delay of the union for many years. But now that 4th Article is entirely dropped out, and whatever statements the Confession has on the subject are effectually modified by that sentence in the 2nd Article of the new basis. Where will you find one ray of testimony on the doctrine in the whole proposed constitution of the new church?"

His listener was in sympathy with him, but being deficient in knowledge ventured the somewhat audacious question:

"But is the doctrine of the Headship of Christ over the nations of much practical importance as regards church life in this new world?"

His answer was ready and unexpected, and opened up a magnificent field for thought and expectation.

"It is of practical importance here and now to bid the Sabbath trains stop their wheels and their whistles on the Lord's Day; and to put the Word of God as a text-book in the hand of every scholar educated in the public schools; and it shall have more marvellous application still in the days that are close upon us. My own conviction is that this is the doctrine that shall yet demand its martyrs. Christ as Prophet has had his witnesses. How many men and women have perished

at the stake rather than give up the Word of God as their guide. Christ as Priest has had His witnesses, who sealed their testimony with their blood, refusing to honor any sacrifice but His, or to approach God through any mediator but Himself. Christ as King over His own church has had His cloud of witnesses, when Scotchmen would cry with their dying breath, 'Though every hair on my head were a life, I would give them all for the crown rights of my Redeemer.' Jesus Christ as King over the nations has yet to be vindicated. That will be the last pre-millennial conflict, when the Lord shall send out of Zion the rod of His strength and rule in the midst of His enemies. But our Zion has just taken the rod of His strength, which is His sceptre, and decided that it is of no practical importance in these modern times. It is the case of the Scribes and Pharisees over again. This is the stone which God's accredited builders are again rejecting, but it shall yet be made the head of the corner."

One morning at breakfast Mr. Ross mentioned the Latin epigram upon the Church of England on account of which Andrew Melville was indicted before James I. upon the novel charge of *scandalum magnatum*. It was necessary in frankness to confess ignorance of Andrew Melville and the whole galaxy of interests associated with his name. He did not attempt enlightenment at that time, but, during the forenoon, he came out of his study with a brown-backed book, McCrie's Life of Melville, open in his hand. He sat down in a rocking chair and read aloud from the pages of that fascinating biography. The two figures, uncle and nephew, opposite in nature, but most harmonious in disposition and aim, became living heroes and almost personal friends as scene after scene of their soldier-like life passed in review. For ministers, in order to be faithful to Christ as King, had to 'endure hardness' in those days 'as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.' That book was read afterwards with the deepest interest, and became a first text-book upon the place God has purposefully given, in the history of the Reformed Church of Scotland, to the Royal Rights of Jesus Christ.

From the beginning of the negotiations for this new union Mr. Ross knew that he could not enter it. As he expressed it himself, "Further concessions on the subject of Christ's Kingship have become impossible to me except by such an act as that of Judas." The prospect before him had in it some very painful features, but he never seemed to falter in his purpose, unless by the hopeful symptom of a heart-searching solicitude that he might falter. Perhaps there was no element in the prospect that he felt more keenly than the separation that would necessarily be made between him and the happy intercourse he had been accustomed to enjoy with his ministerial brethren. It was life to him to meet with the Presbytery, and to take his part in the eager converse and discussion at Synods and Assemblies.

One bright winter afternoon he came out of his study with the large Bible open in his hand.

"Will you look at this?" he said, pointing with his finger, as he laid the book before me, to part of the blessing pronounced by Jacob upon his son Joseph, "Blessings— on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

Then he explained its significance.

"I was thinking," he said, "rather sadly about the changes that would follow upon my staying out of the union next summer. I was thinking especially about my brethren, and the separation there would be between them and me by my refusing to go with them. I looked up to Him for a word of comfort or guidance, and this is what He gave me at once, 'Blessings—upon the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.' Can He not with His word fit into the very thoughts of the heart?"

There was certainly no sorrow left on the countenance. The joy of the direct message was shining there. One of the "blessings" that came upon the head of him who was soon to be ecclesiastically separated from his brethren, was the unbroken love and unshaken confidence of those very brethren whom he was ready for Christ's sake to give up. No longer at church courts,

but often in the old manse itself and on railway trains and at communions he enjoyed the happiest intercourse with his former friends. Though he looked upon every minister in the united church as participant in a great wrong, the large-hearted charity with which he regarded them is manifest in the following words addressed to me some months later. "It may be that those men would have been as wrong in attempting to take my position as I would have been in attempting to take theirs. It is not for us to judge another man's servant."

Mr. Ross attended the Assembly for the last time June, 1875, when it met in Montreal for the consummation of the union. It was a testing time, but it was met with a glad heart and a cheerful countenance, because his way had been made so very clear to him that he knew exactly what his Master wanted him to do. That being settled, other considerations were entirely secondary, and could even be allowed to drop out of sight, they were so small in comparison.

A suggestive glimpse into his mind at the time is obtained from an incident related by his elder, Mr. Forrest, who had also set his face to hold to the position taken against the union. They met in the street one day in Montreal, and Mr. Forrest turned and accompanied him a little distance.

"Mr. Ross," he said, "I have been a great deal troubled with this thought—Some will think I am setting up to be better than other people."

Mr. Ross turned and looked him frankly in the eyes, saying: "Once in the history of our Lord there was only one in all the world to confess Christ, and he was a *thief*. Will that help you any?"

"In the early part of Tuesday, the 15th of June, 1875, the Supreme Courts of the four negotiating Churches met, separately, for the last time in different churches in the city of Montreal. Each adopted a resolution to repair to Victoria Hall, and there to consummate the union. In this place, accordingly, the General Assembly of the Canada Presbyterian Church, the two Synods in connection with the Church of Scot-

land and the Synod of the Lower Provinces assembled at 11 a.m."*

The union was celebrated amidst decorations and congratulations; but John Ross was not amongst them. He had sat in the General Assemblies of earth for the last time. Before parting from his brethren he entered his dissent from their action, read his reasons and laid the document on the table, signed by other three names besides his own. The following is a copy of the paper:

"DISSENT.

"Whereas the General Assembly has resolved and recorded its resolution to repair forthwith to the Victoria Hall for the purpose of consummating the union with the other negotiating Churches, and has declared that the united Church should be considered identical with the Canada Presbyterian Church, and shall possess the same authority, rights, privileges and benefits to which this Church is now entitled, and has, moreover, empowered the Moderator to sign in its name the Preamble and Basis of Union, and also the resolutions adopted in connection therewith, and thus to ratify the Act of Union: and whereas there are found in said basis and resolutions matters which cannot, in our view, be sanctioned by the Church without betraying the integrity and interests of the truth of God and the purity of His worship, We, therefore, crave leave to enter our DISSENT, in our own name and in behalf of all who may adhere to us, and do declare and testify that we are neither bound by, nor responsible for, the Act herein complained of, and offer the following good and sufficient reasons, with others of a like kind heretofore given in, as the grounds of our Dissent, viz.:

"1st. Because of the resolutions regarding modes of worship we cannot enter into union without pledging ourselves, for all time to come, to allow the Organ in all congregations now following that mode of celebrating the praises of God in public worship, and to allow, in

* Dr. Gregg's "Short History," p. 193.

like manner, all other practices as to modes of worship presently followed by congregations, irrespective of the agreement or disagreement of such modes of worship with our views of what the Word of God and the standards of the Church require.

"2nd. Because said basis does not recognize, as our present basis does, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as parts of the standards of the Church, but assigns to them a place of secondary importance, which cannot fail to deprive them of much of the weight which, for many generations past, they have most justly possessed in the eyes of the Church. Taking into consideration the unquestioned and generally-acknowledged influence which those symbols of our faith have, through the blessing of God, exercised upon the moral and doctrinal tone of the Church, as also on her spiritual life, and taking into consideration with this a manifest restlessness on the part of the present generation, with a strong tendency to depart from the ancient landmarks by which the Church has hitherto been guided, the change thus effected cannot, seeing that there has been no just reason assigned for it, be viewed otherwise than as unwarranted and dangerous to the spiritual prosperity of the Church.

"3rd. Because, by the decision now come to, the Church enters into union upon a basis which is exceedingly defective and unsatisfactory in reference to the main questions, viz., the Headship of Christ, both as regards His Church and the nations of the world. As regards the former, namely, His Headship over the Church, it is entirely omitted from the body of the basis, where its supreme importance entitled it to be, and is only met with incidentally in the preamble, without any apparent intention. This is the more remarkable when it is remembered that the Headship of Christ, in certain of its more immediate applications, was the main question at issue between the negotiating parties. Secondly, the preamble of the basis represents this Church as holding the same doctrine, government and discipline with the Church of Scotland, and, conse-

quently, as holding the doctrine of the Headship in the same sense and view in which it has been held by her, that is, the Church of Scotland, throughout the whole period since the Disruption in Scotland. We thus profess ourselves to have come to hold the doctrine in the same way in which the Church of Scotland holds it, and, consequently, to have abandoned our former view of it, which is known, all the world over, to have been totally different from the view held and acted upon by her. Again, as to anything definite concerning Christ's Headship over the nations, it may be said that it is now dropped altogether, and this is the more noticeable when it is remembered what importance was attached to it in forming the existing union. Moreover, the terms in which the subordinate standards are qualified in the basis now adopted render their teaching on this subject to be of uncertain authority.

(Signed) LACHLAN MCPHERSON.
GEORGE FORREST.
JOHN ROSS.
DONALD FRASER.

CHAPTER XI.

DIVISION IN BRUCEFIELD.

SO the great union was consummated, and just two ministers and their two elders entered a dissent, choosing rather to stay outside than to make their home in a structure planted upon a basis which they could not regard as solid rock. Mr. McPherson, the teacher years ago in the Embro school, and John Ross his pupil, now stood side by side in testimony against the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Each was supported by his elder. Would they be supported by their congregations? That was yet to be seen.

In order to understand Mr. McPherson's position, it will be necessary to go back a little. He, alone among his ministerial brethren, had utterly repudiated the union of 1861. His people, on the whole, heartily stood by him in the position taken; and for many years the minister and congregation of East Williams maintained their protesting isolation. So deeply was Mr. McPherson loved and respected by his brethren, that they persistently refused to accept his separation from them as final. They kept his name constantly upon the roll of the Presbytery, rendered him and his congregation any service that was in their power, and used every means that brotherly kindness could suggest to make it easy for him to change his mind and still come in amongst them. His opinion of the wrong done even in the first union basis never changed; but the disheartenment so natural to one standing alone, the discouragement that often comes with feebleness of health and a want of complete unanimity among his people, together with the kindly and continuous action of his brother ministers,

finally overcame his resolution, and both he and his congregation came back to the Presbytery some years before the union of 1875. He was a man of a sensitive spirit and a tender conscience, and he afterwards bitterly regretted what he considered criminal cowardice and unfaithfulness. So deeply did he feel his inconsistency, that he regarded himself unfit to stand as a witness for the King the second time. It was not till the very last, when his spirit was stirred within him for the affront offered to his Lord in the new basis, and the almost utter absence of testimony against it, that he rose to the occasion, in his weakness and brokenness of spirit, to offer himself again as a witness on His side.

In Mr. Ross's note book, dated June 18th, 1875, there is a touching little entry relating to the journey home from that memorable Assembly in Montreal.

"While in Toronto Station, Mr. McPherson sitting at my side, I met the text—'If two of you shall agree on earth touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.' We agreed to ask our people to be given to the Lord and to us, in His name and for His sake."

That was an important matter for these two ministers. Would their people sustain their action? Mr. McPherson's congregation had already experienced the disabilities of an isolated position; would they be willing to face them again? Mr. Ross's people were scarcely able to measure the situation; would their convictions on the subject so momentous in his eyes, be sufficient to give them courage to assume such unknown responsibilities?

There was another matter still, which, though to Mr. Ross an occasion of heartfelt gladness, constituted an additional and serious element in the situation. A little daughter, his first-born, was ready to welcome him back to his home. That home he knew might pass from him and his in a few weeks in consequence of the action just taken. If his congregation decided to remain with him, all things might continue through his life-time without any material change. But if a majority of his people

chose to assert their right to pass into the United Church, the property would go with them, and he and his family would be in rather a painful position. He steadily met such possibilities with some very broad and satisfying promises received from Him at whose call he was facing those hazards, and he came home with a glad and cheerful countenance.

So general were the respect and affection manifested for him by his people, that a possible break there scarcely ever entered into my thoughts. Occasionally he would tell me not to be too confident, and would arrange what we should do if the congregation should fail to stand by him. But I thought he was talking rather in fun than really laying plans that might need to be acted upon.

The meeting at which the congregation was to decide its action was appointed for Tuesday, the 28th of Sept. On Wednesday, the 22nd, as entered in his note book, Mr. Ross received a letter from a brother minister, intimating that two of his people had called, asking counsel in view of the approaching meeting. They wanted to know how they should proceed in seeking to lead the congregation at once to enter the union. This was the first indication of the active existence of what he had all the time felt was to be expected. There was now no doubt that a division was to be made. Two points must be decided by the meeting: 1st. Would the union party be the larger, and carry the property? and, 2nd, How would the people, over whom he had so long watched and prayed, range themselves when they came to take sides?

That Tuesday, the 28th of September, 1875, was, probably, one of the most trying days of Mr. Ross's life. The meeting was unusually large. The position was plainly stated to them. Opportunity was given for both parties in the congregation fully to express their opinion. At last the vote was taken. Forty-five declared their adherence to the position taken by their minister, and forty announced their decision to enter the union, and apply at once to be recognized by the Presbytery.

One point was now happily decided, that the dear old manse would remain with the party who kept with their minister, but the ranging of the people when the vote was taken was a matter full of both pain and pleasure. Some were forsaking him whose sympathy and assistance he had most expected, and others of whom he had stood in doubt joined in the generous enthusiasm of those that rallied to his side in a way that warmed his heart.

When Mr. Logie of Rodgerville, who had kindly attended the meeting, came home and told the result, the news was like a bomb falling at my feet. But the trepidation was not for long. Before Mr. Ross came home it had been stilled into quietness by the last two verses of the 52nd Psalm, especially the first clause, "But I am like a green olive tree in the house of my God," and the third and the fourth taken together, "I will praise thee forever, *because thou hast done it*." The fact that *God*, not man, had done it to work out His own gracious purposes, was reason good why we should praise Him forever, and why not begin now?

These were days to be remembered following that decisive meeting. It was not to be expected that half the congregation could support their minister as the whole had done. Mr. Ross had the heart and hand of a king, and had not been careful to put anything ahead. Yet he fully appreciated, in the circumstances, the pre-eminent importance of a safe financial policy.

"Mamma," he said one evening as I passed him his cup, "we will do without tea rather than go into debt."

Now it may be remembered from a story on an earlier page that to do without tea, and strong tea, too, was one of the most serious of self-denials Mr. Ross could have proposed. But he never had to do without tea, or any other comfort to which he had been accustomed. The people who remained with him showed a persistent and large-hearted generosity that astonished everyone. I did not fully realize then how much loving self-denial there must have been, when the half of the old congregation kept up the semi-annual payments

very close to the figure they used to reach in the days before. This continued steadily to the end of his life here. Besides this, there was a continuous overflow of kindness in many different shapes such as a minister's wife learns highly to appreciate.

Not only was there this constant income, but nine times that little congregation of about forty families made a special effort to show special kindness, or supply some real or fancied need. Surely if Mr. Ross had an interest in the blessing of Abraham, "I will bless him that blesseth thee," there will be peculiar kindness following those families which "blessed" him without stint or intermission, not even staying their hand when his voice was hushed and his pulpit occupied by another.

Three weeks after that memorable Tuesday another important meeting was held. A short notice of it thus appears in his note book :

"Tuesday, 19th Oct.—They held a meeting of Presbytery to-day in Brucefield Church, the first held there since my ordination. The object of it was to sanction the organization of another congregation in Brucefield." That, though not its immediate object, was necessarily its final outcome, if Mr. Ross and his congregation could not be shaken in their determination to maintain their protesting attitude toward the united Church.

This was another trying day. There were several elements of pain in it. The inevitable forming of the seceding half of his people into a separate and rival congregation was a bitter cup to him. His heart in the matter can be felt in an entry dated Dec. 15th, 1875, nearly two months later : "Thinking this morning of our split, and comparing ourselves to an old tree broken in the midst, both the half broken off and the half remaining are sure to perish. The breach cannot be mended. The two can no more be so put together that they can grow as one again. The old stump cannot shoot out new branches so as to make a new top, nor can the half broken off make to itself new roots and secure to itself new growth. Both ends are ruined. While thinking thus, met, 'Drop down, ye heavens,

from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. Let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. I the Lord have created it.' *It is the Lord* who says this." It was a sore trial to a minister who loved his people. In the comfort thus given and taken the reality of the sorrow can be felt. Henceforth there were to be two camps in Brucefield formed out of the one, with all the accompanying testings of spirit and temper unavoidable in the circumstances.

Then his attitude was not really understood by some members of the Presbytery. This can plainly be inferred from the greeting of one minister, a kind, personal friend, but who, having been brought up in the Old Kirk, was scarcely in a position to appreciate his action. He met Mr. Ross that morning with the remarkable greeting, somewhat jocularly rendered :

"Art thou he that troubleth Israel?"

But he was not prepared for the electric flash with which the answer was returned :

"*I* have not troubled Israel, but *thou* and *thy father's house*, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and followed Baalim." Every word of Elijah's answer Mr. Ross saw to apply, and he gave it in the tone and the spirit of a veritable Elijah. The joke lost its intended point, and found another that was quite unexpected.

His brethren, too, were very urgent upon him to reconsider his decision, renounce his protest and join with them again. Their pleadings were keenly felt and hard to resist, not because of the strength of argument, but because of the reality of brotherly love which they expressed. To one who had pressed the point with much goodwill and tact, he replied, and it was the line of his answer to them all :

"I would gladly go with you, but you have laid a snare before me. To avoid that snare I must stand where I am. You have left me, and I dare not follow."

But what made that meeting almost irritating to Mr. Ross was the tone of commiseration that pervaded most

of the speeches of his brethren. They had come to sanction the division of his people and organize another congregation in Brucefield. It was painful work, but it was work that, in the circumstances, must be done. Regret was in order. But the pity, and anxiety for him and his family that continually came up along with the regret, at last became too much for him. In response to some particularly oppressive expression of sympathy he sprang to his feet, and delivered himself to this effect:

"There is no need of so much anxiety about me and my family. While I was in Montreal, before I took the final stand, I received a guarantee of support that puts want out of the question. One who was once poor but is now very rich assumed responsibility for me and mine, so that, as regards that matter, I am independent of churches and congregations as long as I live and longer."

After that there was a more careful avoidance of anything in the shape of pity. When the meeting was over, two of the ministers were discussing what had taken place.

"Who do you think it would be," asked one of the other, "that undertook for the support of Mr. Ross and his family?"

"Why, of course," replied the other, almost testily, "it was the Lord. Don't you understand?"

The amusement and delight of the simple-minded brother, who had allowed himself to be misled by Mr. Ross's business-like way of stating the case, knew no bounds.

Mr. Ross's attitude towards the new congregation almost immediately formed, was entirely characteristic. When they asked the use of the church until their own should be ready, it was promptly granted. There were eighteen acres of land in connection with the old church property. When they asked a part of this for the use of their minister, that, too, was allowed them at little more than a nominal rent. In this kindly and judicious treatment of the new congregation, his elders stood steadily by him. But when the new minister came, and I proposed that we should call.

"No," he replied, "I am not going to call. That in my case would be hollow courtesy. A call means a welcome. I cannot honestly say that I welcome another minister in Brucefield, and I shall not pretend to do so. We shall meet in ordinary course at funerals and in other ways, and he shall know that he has a friend in me if he wants one. But I shall not call."

The result of his honest way of dealing with his young brother was a friendship that showed itself in the end to be deep and true. Before very long the two ministers were helping each other in their harvest like two old neighbors; and some years later the younger man paid a delicate tribute to the memory of his friend by giving to his first-born son the name of *John Ross.*

Very early in the history of the Union congregation an Auxiliary of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society was formed in connection with it. I was urgently invited to join them and give what help I could. But Mr. Ross did not approve.

"If we want to walk in peace with those who have left us," he said, "we must be careful not to try to walk too close. There are too many causes of friction among us to make it safe, human nature being what it is, to risk unnecessary irritations. It will be wiser, for a while at least, to keep ourselves a good deal to ourselves."

The Christian wisdom which guided this decision has appeared to me more and more admirable as years have brought experience.

One peculiar blessing preserved to Mr. Ross during those years in which he

> "Dared to be a Daniel,
> Dared to stand alone,
> Dared to have a purpose firm, and
> Dared to make it known,"

was an unbroken eldership. Had one dropped out, he would have been sorely missed. But they stood by his side, good men and true, George Walker, Robert Carnochan and George Forrest, with even a closer attachment than before. So, with a really brotherly eldership,

and a congregation out of which every discordant, dissatisfied element had withdrawn, his last twelve years were full of peace and quiet prosperity beyond what he had ever known in his earlier days. He had asked his people of the Lord, and they were given to him in a closer sympathy than ever.

Then he was not left quite alone even as to ecclesiastical fellowship. Mr. McPherson's taking the position with him was a most precious alleviation of what would otherwise have been very painful isolation. Two cordial comrades have much more than double the strength and courage of one. The Master in this case acted upon the plan adopted when the disciples first went out to preach. They were sent two and two. Mr. Ross was not alone; Mr. McPherson stood with him. Brucefield congregation was not alone; East Williams congregation shared the position with them; for Mr. McPherson's people had again sustained their pastor in his protest. So the petition agreed on in Toronto Station was granted as regarded both.

The enthusiastic sympathy and co-operation of Mr. Allan, formerly of North Easthope, was an important accession of strength to the two friends. His strong personality, cheerful, racy conversation and effective preaching were all at their service whenever they were needed, and many an ample draft was made upon his good-will.

The following extracts from Mr. Ross's note book of the December immediately following the division of his congregation can scarcely fail to be interesting. The first bears date Tuesday, Dec. 21st, 1875. Its tone will be understood if it is remembered that the pain of recent events was still unhealed, and that the subsequent history of that half of the congregation remaining with him was as yet unknown. Would the actual serious curtailment be followed by a slow and disheartening dwindling? Many expected this, and Mr. Ross was too honest to himself and the circumstances not to face the possibility or possibilities of pain which the situation

involved. It was for him to "behave, and quiet himself, as a child that is weaned of his mother." So cheerful was his daily countenance at the time that I had really no idea then of the deep searchings of heart through which he was passing. He usually sat up late; and then, with his note book and his Bible and his God, he fought the good fight of faith and won the peace that passeth understanding resulting inevitably from casting all the care on Him who careth.

Tuesday, Dec. 21st, 1875. Met just now Jer. x., 23, 24, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," with Isa. xl., 27, "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God."

Why is the Lord putting this verse in Jeremiah so much before me? Because of its continual coming I preached from it only a few Sabbaths ago, and yet it continues to meet me.

1st. Because it is difficult for me to learn the lesson that my way is not in myself, that it is not in me to direct my steps.

2nd. Because God is dealing with me and is going to deal with me in ways which I do not like. The way of my choosing and the way which He chooses for me are not the same, and this text teaches me to acquiesce in His will regarding the way in which He is leading me. This text rebukes a fretting and murmuring spirit and teacheth submission to God. While I continue to see things in my way which trouble me, it is fitting that I should say to God, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

"My way is not hid from the Lord, and my judgment is not passed over from my God." He has warned me of all the things that have happened to me, and has not withholden from me His counsel and direction and comforts in connection with them. He sees my way. It lies open before Him, and He knows fully how to bring me out of all these troubles. But though my way

be not hid from the Lord, it is hidden to myself—covered with darkness. How long things are to continue thus I do not know. Whether a turn for the better shall come in the future I do not know. Whether yet greater darkness and difficulties may yet be sent I do not know. My way is hidden from myself, but it is not hid from the Lord. He has turned his own eyes upon it, and has taken it into consideration to make it a matter of care to Himself. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

Dated Wednesday, Dec. 29, 1875, there is a rough draft of a sermon which gives a good idea of the sort of truth that was particularly sweet to his own soul.

Jer. III., 17: "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem; neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north."

I. There is in these words a promise of a vast union. This union is threefold.

1st. The breach between Judah and Israel shall be healed.

2nd. The separation and enmity between the different Gentile nations shall be lost in a common interest in Jerusalem and the name of the Lord. "All nations shall be gathered together to Jerusalem to the name of the Lord."

3rd. The hatred between Jew and Gentile shall be ended. There shall be a union of all Israel and all the nations, a vast union, such an one as the world has never yet seen, but such an one as shall certainly become a fact in the world, for God has promised it.

II. Consider the leading characteristics of that union.

1st. In it the name of the Lord is the bond of union and the object of worship.

2nd. This union is a covenant of holiness: "They shall no more walk after the imagination of their evil heart."

3rd. The throne of the Lord identified with Jerusalem, is the centre of this vast union. "Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord."

What is meant by this extraordinary title which shall be given to Jerusalem at that time—"*the throne of the Lord?*"

a. That Jerusalem shall in that day own the Lord as her King.

b. That she shall glory in the Lord as her King. In her eyes then His throne shall be lifted up—it shall be more important than all the universe besides.

c. That she shall own the laws of her King as her laws.

d. That in her not only the King's laws but the King's spirit shall be reigning.

e. That the power of throne shall be manifested in her and for her.

Here it is promised in this word of prophecy that Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and the actual state of matters in Christ's Zion shall yet correspond to the prophetic name given. A time is coming when in very deed Jerusalem shall be to Him a throne. What is a throne? It is a seat from which He issues His royal laws and orders, rewards and punishments. The throne is for the King, for Himself alone, and for Him *as King*. It exists not for any other at all, but for the King Himself.

1. Think of the honor thus put upon Jerusalem.
2. Think of the power.
3. Think of the holiness.
4. Think of her nearness of access to Him when she becomes His throne. Ready answer for prayer.
5. Think of her safety, security and peace.
6. Think of her riches, grace and happiness.
7. Think of the power she will then have to attract and draw all to her when she becomes known as the throne of the Lord. Why does she now attract so feebly? Because she has forgotten her King.

Let us now test by the marks which the text furnishes the character of the unions which are taking

place between the branches of the visible Church, and particularly the union which has just taken place between the different bodies of Presbyterians in our land. Does it go in the direction of exalting the throne of the Lord, or in the opposite direction?

(The exclusion of the Kingship from the Basis and the modification of the Confession wherever it spoke plainly on the subject is here again explained, and thus the recent union is proved to be of a different character completely from the one in the text.)

Let us now examine how Jerusalem becomes the throne of the Lord. The Lord chooses her for His throne, takes her for His throne, fits her to answer to Him all the purposes of a throne. From her He rules the world. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion." It is not the throne that rules, but the King. The Lord has then taken to Him His great power and has reigned. *His Kingdom has* come.

(The next, dated nine days later, is interesting in itself, and as a specimen of Mr. Ross's method of handling texts. The personal touch at its close makes it appropriate in this connection, as well as the time in which it was written.)

Jan. 7th, 1876.—Met before retiring Song 7 : 9, "The roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak."

When this is the case, the tongue of the sucking child will not "cleave to the roof of his mouth."

The roof of the mouth compared to the "best wine for my beloved" is a form of speech not easy to be understood.

1st. The best wine is pleasant and inviting to the taste. He who drinks it will desire to drink it again.

2nd. The best wine is reviving. It will so gladden the heart that the "lips of those who are asleep will speak."

3rd. Strengthening speech may be compared to the best wine. The word in season, the word that comforts, revives, cheers and fills with the Holy Spirit truly

answers to this description, and the roof of that mouth from which such words flow may be spoken of as in these words of the Song : "The roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved."

In order to answer to this description the mouth—

1st. Must be linked with a regenerated soul. The throat of sinners is "an open sepulchre." Their mouth is full of "cursing and bitterness ;" "cursing, fraud, deceit, mischief and vanity." Such a mouth cannot answer to the description given in the Song. A man must become a new creature before it can be said of him : "The roof of thy mouth is like the best wine for my beloved."

2nd. In order to answer to this description the mouth must also be devoted to the Lord Himself, especially given to Him as an instrument to be used at His will.

3rd. The Word of God must be in the mouth as the word of open witness-bearing, as the word of praise and prayer.

4th. The mouth that declares the salvation of Christ for the conversion of sinners, and the comfort and quickening of Christians, is to Him "as the best wine."

5th. The Holy Ghost must be dwelling in the man and speaking by him in order that "the roof of his mouth may be like the best wine for my beloved."

Met the above while my heart was full of sharp feelings towards individual opponents here. Well, the roof of the mouth that is framing angry words against those who hate us is not like the best wine for my beloved. It is a mouth that needs to be "held in with bit and bridle."

CHAPTER XII.

HOME LIFE AND HAPPY TALKS.

THOSE who knew Mr. Ross only with the solemnity of the Sabbath service on his spirit, or with the seriousness of a commissioned messenger of Heaven on his countenance, did not know him fully. Some natures are as many-sided as a polished diamond, each side with a flash of its own : and a complete character must have as many shades as a rainbow. Let us suppose that the soul, in its highest exercises, has all its tints blended into the white light of spiritual life ; yet it is very delightful to come in contact with the same soul when a more partial display of its prismatic colouring gives shades entirely unlike the white, but each beautiful, and each a component part of the perfect whole. To know Mr. Ross in his many-sidedness you would need to accept one of the cordial invitations he delighted in extending, and spend a week with him in his own home.

He had a keen sense of the comical, and often gave an unexpected turn to the conversation by a mere word. On one occasion I was eagerly seeking to prove the importance of an important matter. With every sail set and under a powerful breeze of enthusiasm I was bearing down upon my object. The seriousness with which he listened added eagerness to my eloquence, for I read by his face that I had caught his attention and was probably carrying his judgment. When the point was reached where he should have expressed his agreement, he answered with all the heartiness of complete conviction :

" Mamma, it is perfectly plain that the country will never be right till you are sent to Parliament."

Let any enthusiastic woman imagine the cold-water bath such a speech must constitute. There was plenty of fun in the answer, but not a trace of that undertone of contempt that would have made it painful.

A similar turn was once given at a Synod in Hamilton. A prominent member of the Court was proposing some plan that did not at all commend itself to Mr. Ross's judgment. It involved a deputation, which was to be sent on the 1st of April to wait on some party or parties. At mention of the date, Mr. Ross interjected, in a voice that could be distinctly heard, "Say the *second* of April.' The laugh that greeted this covert expression of opinion was, for a few seconds, inexplicable to the mystified speaker, who could see nothing to occasion it either in his own utterances or in the proposed change of date.

His occasional waste of time as it used to appear, was for some years a complete puzzle to me. When tired of study, he would fasten upon anything that happened to catch his attention, and give himself up to it for hours. Knowing how deeply many of his people appreciated a visit, I was very anxious that he should gratify them as much as possible, carrying his influence into the very heart of their homes, as it had occasionally been my privilege to see him do. But sometimes when he had an afternoon free he would spend it doing something that did not seem to be important at all. On one occasion especially, he had taken up an arithmetical puzzle—so to arrange the figures from 1 to 25 in a square marked off into twenty-five smaller squares, that each row of figures should add to the same amount. When I saw the head and hand, capable of such precious work, wearying themselves hour after hour on what was of so little profit, I felt sorry and disappointed. As that thought clearly defined itself, another entirely unsought, took shape just as distinctly. Clause by clause it added itself until I was surprised, humbled and grateful. This was the word that *was sent* to check the natural but presumptuous criticism I had been making. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own

master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand." "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me—thou understandest my thoughts afar off."

Around the manse stood a few beautiful forest trees, and in the fields behind were groups of elms and maples, varied with butternut, birch and wild cherry. They gave an air to the place that was unique, in this land of clear fields and simply patches or strips of forest. There was a touch of character in the continued existence of these trees, which, like the rest of the first giant crop on Canadian soil, had been doomed to the log heap. When Mr. Ross first took up his residence in the old log manse, the predecessor of the ample brick cottage of more recent days, most of the nine acres surrounding it was unbroken bush, like many of the farms in the neighborhood. He went out one morning with his axe, which he could use with an old backwoodman's effectiveness, to do the "underbrushing," that is, the preliminary clearing away of the smaller trees, in order to the systematic levelling of the heavy timber afterwards. It must have been spring time, for his eye marked in tree after tree a newly built bird's nest. He could not chop these down, and upset the domestic plans of so many little lovers. The woodman spared each tree so tenanted, and, as many of them as were able to survive the burning of the log heaps afterwards piled throughout the little field, lived to flaunt ever more stately and beautiful thanks to the kind heart that had cared for the sorrows of the little birds.

A memorable household delight was ours directly in consequence of this act of mercy to the birds. Ten of the trees so spared were sugar maples. Though small at first, twenty-five or thirty years of unimpeded growth in the clearing had made them large and strong. As soon as the practiced eye of the sugar maker detected prospect of a good "run" of sap, the gouge and ten spiles were secured, ten dishes of some sort were abstracted from the household supply, and the trees were tapped in presence of every child big enough to follow

their leader through the softening snow with or without a burden. It was fairyland to the children when the sap began to run and the boiling commenced. Mr. Ross was up to every trick of the trade, and could clarify and sugar off the daintiest of sweets in a way to be excelled by none. One season he made ten pounds of sugar, and another twelve quart jars were filled with syrup. Often it did not amount to more than a bit of delightful sport for Papa and the little ones.

There is one peculiarly happy memory connected with these maple trees. When Dr. MacKay, of Formosa, was home on his first furlough in company with his wife, they spent several days with us. Mrs. MacKay had never seen a "sugaring off," and Mr. Ross was in his element in exhibiting the whole process, while the missionary was as interested as either of them in every step of progress made. As master of ceremonies, Mr. Ross handled ladle, snow and twig, and dealt out his sweets in their ever changing degree of sugary consistency to his delighted guests, while children of varying sizes occupied less prominent positions, sure to share bountifully also in the dainties going around. These are scenes that must spring up to memory amongst us whenever the spring sun produces the conditions of air and earth inseparably associated with the tapping of the beautiful maples around the old manse.

Up to the time of the division of the congregation, after which he felt that the honor of his Lord was involved in the proper management of finances, he was almost thoughtless as regarded outlay. In his personal habits he was extremely economical. In little things he guarded carefully against unnecessary expense; but wherever his generosity was appealed to, or any of his pet pursuits were concerned, he delighted in spending freely. To give the writer's experience during the first six months will reveal, probably, extremes in this direction. Early in the autumn an agent for a nursery called, with his book of beautiful pictures, and a valise of jars full of specimens of the fruit to be grown by his trees and vines. Before Mr. Ross knew what he was doing,

he had given an order, mostly for pear trees and grape vines, to the extent of $25. He was a little surprised when a paper was handed to him with the items and amount; but he made no changes. About six weeks later a peddler came with a pack of rather high class dry goods. In a very few minutes goods were bought to the value of $38—a beautiful shawl at $25, and enough black cloth for an every day suit for himself. Before the goods were quite repacked, another peddler came in, wanting to sell a set of springs that were to cost $5. Mr. Ross was entertaining him favorably by the time the other was ready to leave. No. 1 nodded complacently to No. 2 as he went away, remarking with a brotherly smile, "This is a good place for peddlers. No. 2 was also made happy by an order before he left the house. It could not have been many days afterward that a mysterious parcel came home from Seaforth. It was a suggestive pasteboard box, and proved to be charged with a $50 set of mink furs bought the night before; and no persuasion could prevail upon him to take them back again. But in later years this tendency to lavish generosity was usually limited to more modest exhibitions.

His manner with little children was usually very happy. He never lost the heart of a boy, and so was often able to strike a chord to which young natures could vibrate, and the downright genuineness of his own beliefs enabled him to pass them on in such a way that children were predisposed to accept them. During my first winter in Brucefield, a lady friend spent some weeks with us. She had with her a little daughter, a child of six, with large, earnest, dark eyes and a sensitive nature. While they were with us, Mr. Ross was called upon to attend a funeral. That evening, after little Maggie had gone to sleep, the mother was telling with regret of the nervous shrinking the child evinced towards death and everything associated with it. "I am very sorry," she said, "she has so early learned to be afraid of death."

Mr. Ross had brought his paper from the office on

his way home, and was now apparently buried in its columns. But it was often noticed that, however deeply absorbed in what he was reading, if a remark was made in the room that touched anything of interest, he always heard it. He looked up at once and asked the mother :

"Have you ever taught her about the resurrection?"

"Why, no," she replied, evidently seeing at once the importance of the omission, "I never thought of that."

The next day he called the child to him, and the two had quite an interested conversation. The mother told us afterwards Maggie's own report of it.

They were lying awake in the morning, when the child put her arm over her mother's neck, saying, "Mamma, do you know about the resurrection?"

"What is that?" replied the mother evasively.

"It's just like this," replied the little girl. "You know when you used to put me to sleep in your arms—that is just like dying, to the people that love Jesus. Then when you put me in bed—that is just like putting the body in the grave. But when you call me in the morning and say, 'Maggie, get up,' and I jump up like this," suiting the action to the word, "that is just like the resurrection. For Jesus is coming again, and He will wake all the dead people up, and they will jump up just like that."

"I do believe," said the mother humbly, "that her terror of death has melted away before the thought of the resurrection, and death being only a sleep out of which Jesus himself will wake us up."

It will be noticed that only a part of the joyful truth about the death of a Christian comes out in little Maggie's account. The parting of the soul and body, and the blissful dwelling of the soul in the presence of the Lord while the body rests in the grave, does not appear at all. Possibly the child reported only part of what had been taught her, giving, as many an older person does, the thought that had met her own need, and letting the rest slip. But quite as likely the part she reported was the only part her teacher gave her at

the time, leaving the communication of further truth to a further lesson.

His own little daughter, Bessie, was early instructed in the doctrine of the resurrection. One Sabbath, when still almost a baby, she heard the word "Resurrection" uttered from the pulpit in the midst of the discourse. The child's attention was instantly caught. She felt now that her father was addressing herself, and she listened for some minutes, watching for more.

But the reality of the hope of the resurrection in the heart of the little child led to one very sorrowful scene. When Bessie was three and a-half years old, a little gray rabbit was given her as a Christmas box. Her stocking was almost filled with sundries, and then, just before she came bounding out to inspect her treasures, the rabbit was placed at the top, with its head and erect ears showing over the edge. None of her other presents could compare with this, that would nestle into her neck or play about with her on the carpet with all the fascination of young life like her own. It lived till the bright spring sunshine was coaxing the thorn hedge into leaf, and then, one morning, dear little "Bunny" was found in its own cosy corner quite dead. After breakfast, she went out with her father to lay the loved playfellow out of sight. It was truly pathetic. It was Bessie's first sorrow. After the rabbit had been laid in its grave on the homeward side of the thorn hedge, and gently covered with the warm spring earth, the little girl lifted her tear-dimmed eyes to her father's face and said, with hope shining through the sorrow, "But Bunny will rise again, Papa. He will rise again at the resurrection?" He was too genuine to allow the child to believe a lie, but too tender to spoil the hope without pain. It was left to a deeper sorrow than she then deemed possible, even the removal of that precious father out of her sight, to teach her the unutterable restfulness of the sure hope of a resurrection in Christ.

It might be supposed that so intent a student as Mr. Ross would find the restless activity of the little children almost unbearable. But that was not the

case. It was comparatively seldom that their noise seemed to disturb him. He made large room for them, and took perpetual pleasure in their company. Then he kept up to the end his habits of midnight study, so that he had his own special time when all was quiet. Saturday, also, he usually claimed to be free from interruption, though exception was often made in favor of the youngest, who, when old enough to play independently, was often allowed into the study, to pile books or arrange blocks, with an occasional play with Papa as a change.

In conversation he was extremely interesting, though it was not in every direction he was willing to be drawn out. I asked him one day his opinion of a certain prominent man in the church. He gave it cordially, and with such evident intuition of character and graphic, artistic touch, that I was delighted. It was not long until his opinion of another was asked. That, too, was given. But when a third was suggested, he answered promptly: "Why do you ask my opinion of these men? You lead me into danger in doing so. I am not at liberty to speak evil of my brother, and an honest analysis of character often necessitates the notice of things that are not good. I think we had better talk of something else." His "Book" he always found particularly sharp on anything approaching evil speaking, and had consequently learned to be very careful in his watch over his own tongue.

Further to illustrate this trait in his character, it may be well to recall an anecdote that belongs to an earlier date. After a meeting of Presbytery, he and several other ministers were taking tea together. Some poor absent brother was the subject of conversation, and unkind things, and things the reverse of commendatory, were freely said. In the midst, who should be shown into the room but the unconscious subject of the talk. Now Mr. Ross had not joined in the evil speaking; but his conscience rebuked him for not having rebuked the rest. It also led him to administer the rebuke still, though late, in a somewhat appalling manner. He

broke the momentary pause that naturally resulted from the circumstances by addressing the new comer :

"Mr. ——," he said, "do you know what we have been saying about you? We have just been saying that you are so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so," enumerating some of the different faults that had been predicated of him.

This rather embarrassing communication was judiciously met by the party addressed. "Well," he said, meditatively, "perhaps you have come too near the truth."

The 6th and 7th verses of the 6th of Deuteronomy were taken literally and practically into his daily life. "These words shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." His happiest talks were those directly on the word of God. When he got a deeper insight into some text, it was his delight to talk the matter over with those who sat around his own table. Many a precious bit of exposition he left behind him in this way.

We had been singing at family worship a part of the 91st Psalm. When the service was over he turned to me and asked :

"Can you explain to me how that Psalm is constructed?"

Now I knew it was a structure every stone of which was a gem of kin with the twelve stones forming the foundations of the New Jerusalem; but I had never looked for a plan according to which they had been laid.

"The whole Psalm," he said, "divides itself naturally into three parts, two of them very short but very important. The first two verses stand distinct from the rest of the Psalm and distinct from each other. The first verse is God's own advertisement of one safe hiding-place in this world of trouble and confusion. 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' The second verse is the satisfied response of the individual

soul to God's advertisement. 'I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, my fortress, my God, in Him will I trust.' The rest of the Psalm is made up of God's assurances of absolute and minute safe-keeping to the individual soul that so answers His advertisement. Read the whole Psalm over, dividing it in that way; be sure you take up the second verse as your own, and see the power that each verse that follows then has for yourself."

This explanation of the structure of the Psalm has often reminded me of advertising letters sent out by pushing business houses. They first explain to you the advantages to be derived from dealing with them. Next they supply you with a printed letter, putting the very words into your hand they are anxious to receive from you. Sometimes an envelope ready addressed and even stamped is enclosed, so that you have nothing to do but to sign your name to the letter furnished, and mail it. At such pains has God been in indicting this 91st Psalm. He presses upon your attention the advantages to be gained by accepting as your own His "secret place" of refuge. Next He furnishes you with the very words of the answer He is waiting to receive. All that is wanted is that you sign your name, as it were, and breathe the message up to Heaven. Then you can go on reading as your own the already published answer verse by verse.

On another occasion Mr. Ross asked the question: "Can you show the connection between the two parts of the 89th Psalm, and the significance of their being placed in the order in which you find them?"

Such questions are puzzling to those who have studied the Psalms only for the finding of precious single verses, and have neglected to watch for their scope or structure. Having professed inability to give an opinion, we were asked to look over it and see if we could form one.

When the subject was brought up again later in the evening, we were better prepared to enter into it, having studied the Psalm, and noticed with interest the complete transition at the 38th verse. We found the first

thirty-seven verses one continuous song of joyful confidence in God's promises and faithfulness, and the last fourteen an expostulatory statement of actual facts as completely contradictory of the promises as stubborn facts could possibly be.

It is impossible in this case, to recall Mr. Ross's words, or even the line of thought along which he led us to the point he had in view. All that is entirely gone from memory. But the thought to which he did lead is still beautifully plain. He made us understand that this is constructed to be the special Psalm to meet a special experience. It is fitted to the case of those who have embraced God's promises, rested in them, counted on them, and *yet find on actual experience*, that they are *not fulfilled.*

"This is a test," he said, "to which most of God's people are put at one time or another. Some matter concerning which they had joyfully trusted God in His promises, instead of going right, goes entirely wrong. Then they are liable to be oppressed with a double sorrow, not only the failure of their hopes, but, worse still, the seeming unfaithfulness of their God, and that in what had been a matter of special confidence between them.

"Let such an one take up the 89th Psalm. Let him sing of God's faithfulness and power and promises until his heart is full of them. Then he can tell God of the actual facts, so contradictory of the promises, and finish up with the last verse. 'Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and amen.'

"This is trusting God in the face of *facts.* Abraham did so when called to offer up Isaac. Though by God's own command the boy's blood was to be shed, and his body to be consumed on the altar, yet he held on to the Lord's promise. 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called.' 'Accounting that God was able even to raise him from the dead.' That was a thing unknown in human history before, but Abraham's faith staggered not even at that. To him God's everlasting promise was surer than death itself. If one must go down, it would have to be death;

the promise *could not* fail. This is the same faith Jesus asked of Jairus. Death had snatched away the child that the Lord had undertaken to cure. 'Fear not, believe only,' was Christ's word to him. Facts were against faith for Jairus, but he was told to hold on to faith and let facts go. This is the faith that honors God and that He will honor."

I have since thought in this connection of a mother whose only son was lost at sea, leaving no token behind that he had yielded himself to his Saviour. She had no human testimony that the boy was saved, but she steadily maintained: "I have God's promises that I trusted for him from a child. Human testimony may deceive; apparent conversions may prove false; but these promises cannot fail." Is not this the same God-honoring faith?

His Sabbath morning discourses were usually carefully studied, though the text was sometimes changed at the last minute, if authoritative guidance to another text was given. But the afternoon addresses were often not premeditated at all, except as he had already, at one time or another, carefully thought over nearly every passage in the Bible. In such circumstances he sometimes got light upon the word he was handling while speaking that came with delightful freshness to himself. One afternoon he had taken the "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." When he came home to take a hurried tea before the evening meeting, he was full of a thought that had come to him while seeking to apply the last clause, "of whom I am chief." He spoke of it as "The personal use Paul makes of the faithful saying." "Has the Lord come to save *sinners?* Then I am a sinner, and chief of them." He claims promptly his position in the class Christ came to save. He evidently had much enjoyed pressing upon the people to follow Paul's example, and claim their place in the same class: "God be merciful to *me* a *sinner*," and then to remember that these were exactly the people Jesus came to save.

He was much pleased at another time with the confession of a dying girl in whom he had taken a deep interest. She had been for many weeks in great distress of mind, knowing that death was near, and she had no sure hope. The word that at last became an anchor to her soul was this : "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

"I saw hope for me in that verse," she said. "I am lost. I have known it for months. But Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, and that means me. Now I am just trusting Him to do what He came to do."

A similar thought, was thrown out in connection with the thirty-first verse of the fifth chapter of Acts : "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins."

"Jesus Christ has been 'exalted of the Father' to do a certain work. May He not be *trusted* to do that which He has been exalted of the Father on purpose to accomplish? He is God's commissioned and advertised agent for the doing of this work. Whosoever needs 'repentance and remission of sins,' let him apply to Jesus Christ."

On one occasion I was in much perplexity. It was a matter of right and wrong, but so involved that I could not determine which was which. At last I explained the matter to Mr. Ross, expecting definite counsel that should end perplexity. He saw at once the seriousness of the situation. But, to my disappointment, he declined to give a definite opinion, though giving something instead which I knew he considered better than fallible human counsel : "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

Now it so happened that this was the very verse that I had been longing to lay hold of, but it hung too high, and I answered :

"I cannot claim that verse, for there is a condition in it. I know that in all my ways I do not acknowledge Him, though I wish I did. So you see I cannot claim the promise."

He paused a moment before answering—not as if he

did not know what to say, but as though thinking how to put it in the simplest way.

"You cannot get it that way," he said, "but try it this way. In this one matter acknowledge him by calling upon Him to be your wisdom, and then in this one matter claim the promise and rest upon it. In the next matter, acknowledge Him, and in that, too, rest upon Him that He will be as good as His word. In all matters acknowledge Him, and in all matters He will direct your paths Your way of putting it would stop any mouth from speaking of that promise to God, and that shows it cannot be the right view, for He gave the promise to be brought back to Himself and claimed."

It was very simple, but it put a sure word of promise within reach, a word that pledged guidance out of any labyrinth of perplexity. There are some promises peculiarly sweet when trusted in the dark. This is one of them.

Many flashes of thought and spiritual insight were received in daily intercourse with him. Some of them, like the foregoing, stand out distinctly as forever associated with his memory. Others have been forgotten, and many others have been received into the general stock of intellectual possessions without any distinct memory associated to indicate from whence they originally came. These may be perpetuated in their influence upon other lives, but no eye but one can trace them back to The Man With the Book, or past him again to other lives still from which his received inspiration.

CHAPTER XIII.

LONDON, HURON AND BRUCE RAILWAY.

DURING the summer of 1875 a railway was laid between London and Wingham. Railway companies and shareholders were thinking only of dividends and probabilities of traffic; but, influenced by these worldly considerations, they laid down their track in the very position which constituted it a veritable Heaven-sent highway between East Williams at the south, Brucefield in the middle, and the two little companies of still-protesting Christians in the northern townships of Ashfield and Kincardine.

It will be remembered that, in 1861, when the union was formed between the (Free) Presbyterian Church and the United Presbyterian Church, Mr. McPherson and his congregation were not the only parties which protested against the union basis as fatally defective on the subject of the Headship of Christ over the nations. Two little companies of Free Churchmen in those northern townships joined in the protest, and refused to have anything to do with churches or ministers which had become party to the union covenant.

For the fourteen years intervening between the first union and the second, these men had maintained their testimony unflinchingly. There was no compromise in their attitude. They carried their protest out to its legitimate length. They were witnesses for the King, but witnesses with no voice in church courts. They could make their testimony felt only by action, but this action gave no uncertain sound. Not only did they withdraw from communing with the Canada Presbyterian Church; they withdrew from attendance at public

worship, and even went without the administering of baptism amongst them, because there was not one minister in all the land from whom they felt at liberty to receive it. Yet they remembered the word which is a law of the Kingdom, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." In each township a little meetinghouse was erected, and regular service conducted on the Lord's Day. One truly godly young man, a Mr. McDougall, who had been laboring in that region as a catechist, was strongly in sympathy and was of much service to them; and one of their own number, an elder, Mr. Donald McKenzie, was also greatly blessed in opening up to them the Word of God. They edified one another, and "in their patience possessed their souls," bearing reproach and misunderstanding as their forefathers had been called to bear persecution and death "for the honor of their King."

There have been many ill-natured or foolishly light remarks passed about bigotry and blind obstinacy in connection with this and other like instances of the simple steadfastness of the few in opposition to the many. But what is ridiculed as blind obstinacy in one generation is often lauded as faithfulness to advanced principle in the next. It may be, before another generation has passed away, it will be acknowledged that these men and women stood faithful in their testimony to Jesus Christ as King, *because* the King Himself took pains to strengthen them with might by His Spirit in the inner man on purpose to the bearing of this testimony. In His inscrutable management of the history of the world, He was going to allow His own people to "profane His crown by casting it to the ground," but, out of respect to Himself, He would not do that without raising up witnesses to testify to the dignity of the crown that was being so used. Men smiled at the pertinacity of these witnesses, and called it obstinacy. But it was really more like the fire Christian saw in the house of the Interpreter, which burned brighter and

brighter, though constantly deluged with water. The secret of the continuous flame was discovered when they led the wondering Christian round so that he could see One steadily, though unobserved, pouring in oil from behind.

When, at the consummation of the union of 1875, two ministers refused to enter, the interest of these two little congregations in the north may easily be imagined. Were they at last to be relieved in their position of reproach and utter isolation? Were they again to have the privileges of communion and baptism without the necessity of sanctioning the union basis that had dishonored their King? These two ministers had both entered the first union, where the tampering with the King's kingship began. Would they now repudiate only the further defects of the last basis? If that were all, then no help could come through them. Or, would they repudiate as well the attitude towards the Headship in the union of 1861, and take up anew the wholehearted testimony gloried in by the Free Church at first? In a matter of such serious moment there must be no hastily-formed conclusions.

Early in 1876 the new railway commenced running daily trains, just in time for the journeyings north and south that were to continue without cessation during the next eleven years. Mr. McPherson, Mr. Allan and Mr. Ross, with their elders, had already constituted themselves into a regular Presbytery, competent to take ecclesiastical action in proper form. This little Presbytery was appointed to meet in the Brucefield manse, April 12th, 1876. It met accordingly, and delegates were in attendance from the northern congregations. These were received heartily into fellowship. A communion was arranged to be held amongst them in the following June, and a Sabbath was to be given them once a month by one of the ministers, alternating between the two congregations.

There was no Brucefield ear present to hear the joy expressed when the three northern delegates reached home and told their good news; but echoes of it were

still vibrating when, years afterwards, the writer spent a few days amongst them.

"That communion was a great time," said one good, motherly woman. "We baked till we had a barrelful of bread beforehand, and laid out the lofts in the barn for visitors, so that we could put up as many as should come."

It was the care over those congregations that made the new railway of such special importance in the circumstances. At first Mr. McPherson took his share of this additional work. But he was an old man, never very robust, and now getting decidedly feeble, and very soon the monthly journeyings came to be left entirely to Mr. Ross. Once a month, on the appointed day, he first put his congregation and household on the care of Him who careth. Then, with a light heart, he went to speak the words of the King among those who set much store by the King and all that pertained to Him.

He took much pleasure in this work; but it was not without difficulties that made him realize the feebleness of human resources, and the need of constant supplies of wisdom and spiritual power. A position of isolation is a position of peculiar temptation. It tends to narrowness while it develops intensity. In such a position it is only by walking constantly in the Master's company and watching broadly for His commands, that we can be kept from the pendulum swing—going as far wrong in one direction as those we are condemning have gone in another. For the sake of those whose consciences were so excessively tender concerning anything that might be construed into a sanctioning of the United Church, Mr. Ross thought it right to deny himself privileges of brotherly fellowship to an extent which his own judgment of the situation would not have rendered necessary. But what he gave to them in gentle consideration they gave back to him in grateful appreciation. He remarked on one occasion the difference it makes to the soul of a preacher when he is attempting to feed those that are hungry or merely to feast those

that are full. The one sort of work exhilarates while the other exhausts. It was the exhilarating work he had to do in the north.

Another interest belongs to these northern journeys. It was at the funeral of one of his young men in Kincardine that his attention was first turned to the religious services of the Freemasons. According to custom, he had the first place. When he had finished, the Masons went through their exercises. During their prayer, which was read from a service book, Mr. Ross felt in his spirit that this was an approach to God without a Mediator. He watched narrowly the concluding part of the prayer, which confirmed his impression. As soon as it was finished he addressed the chaplain:

"May I ask if the Masons draw near to God in their own name and righteousness, or in the name and righteousness of Jesus Christ?"

"I have read the whole service," replied the party addressed.

"Then am I to understand that the Masons present themselves as worshippers before God without a Mediator?"

"Our Order dates back before the Christian Era, and no changes have been introduced into our service on account of subsequent events."

"Then," said Mr. Ross, in a voice to be heard at the outskirts of the crowd, "what I have to say is,—*Let all men beware of the Masons.* It is as much as a man's life is worth—it is as much as his soul is worth—to come before God in his own name or in any other name than that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians, hear what the Lord Himself hath said. 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh with the glory of His Father and with the holy angels.'"

After that he felt strongly on the subject. The impiousness of men who have named the name of Christ and call Him Master and Lord, identifying themselves with such unchristian worship, deeply stirred his spirit

—so deeply that, in fencing the tables afterwards he has warned Masons that, except as they see and confess and forsake this sin they may be afraid to present themselves at the table of the Lord. This whole matter was the occasion of considerable dissatisfaction in some quarters, but it was easier to characterize his action unnecessary fault-finding than to disprove his position.

There were journeys to the south as well as to the north. More especially was this the case when, about the year 1883, Mr. McPherson's failing health made it necessary for him to resign his charge, and seek in rest, and a sojourn among his native hills for some measure of recovery from the feebleness that had come upon him.

At the call of Mr. Donald Fraser, one of the elders who had stood steadily at Mr. McPherson's side through all difficulties, Mr. Ross attended the congregational meeting held to decide the action of the people now left without an under-shepherd. Should they apply to Presbytery to be taken in upon the basis against which they had so long protested? or should they maintain their protest still and remain as they were? The result of the meeting was that a majority decided to enter the union, but a hearty and compact minority determined still to maintain their protest. With a speed which nothing but genuine zeal could explain, a neat new church was built and equipped, and a modest congregation, by their regular meeting outside the United Church, perpetuated the testimony that dishonor had been done to the rights of Jesus Christ. God has need of witnesses, and He knows how to raise them up, and how to hold them up, and He knows, too, how to terminate the testimony when it has done the work intended. The fact is, if His people would only realize it, He knows how to manage everything; and it is simply lack of faith in His guiding that makes so many blunders to appear in the record even of His own.

There was loyalty to Christ in the action of the minority, and there were tokens of His gracious presence amongst them. It was not long before Mr. Fraser was laid on his deathbed. Several times Mr. Ross went

down to see him, and on one of these occasions the sick man said to him :—

"My sky is full of stars." Then he added in a way to give gladness to one who considered no honor higher than that of being the King's messenger, "The stars are the texts you have been preaching from lately, and they shine upon me with the light of Heaven."

After spending many months in Scotland in a vain search for health, Mr. McPherson came home to endure a long and weary illness at Ailsa Craig, within reach of his beloved people. The most careful and judicious nursing often could not ease his pain, or give the rest the pain and weariness craved. Toward the end of the protracted trial he longed exceedingly for release. But, with the tenacity of life often noticed in those who have never enjoyed robust physical health, the jaded spirit was not allowed to quit the wasted body. During Mr. Ross's last visit to him, having been speaking almost complainingly of the refusal of the dying body to quit its hold upon the immortal spirit, he looked up with a gleam of his old quiet humor and cheerful faith to say :

"He who put this soul into the body will know how and when to take it out again."

Is not this a quieting view of death ?

> "My times are in thy hand ;
> My God, I wish them there :
> My life, my soul, my all I leave
> Entirely to thy care."

An entry in Mr. Ross's journal dated April 1st, 1886, runs as follows :

"Returned to-day from Ailsa Craig. Mr. McPherson departed this life on the 29th of March, and was buried yesterday in Nairn Cemetery. He was in his 73rd year. The funeral was large, old and serious people predominating. Mr. McMillan from London, Mr. Ferguson, formerly of Lobo, Mr. Anderson of Nairn and myself, were the ministers present. Mr. Forrest and his wife and Neil Ross were down from Brucefield. Mr. McMillan led in the first prayer, and Mr. Anderson in the last. I

spoke from John xx., 17: 'Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.'

"'Read at the grave, Isa. lx., 19, 20, 'The sun shall no more be thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.' 'Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?' 'I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' 'Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him!

'Cast thou thy burden on the Lord,
And He shall thee sustain.'"

Anyone familiar with the manner in which God spoke to Mr. Ross in the special texts to which his fingers turned cannot fail to appreciate the complete message that thus came to him as his beloved brother was buried out of his sight. It is not a mere cluster of appropriate texts: it is the development of a thought. Even the parting injunction is not a transition. It was to him a most tender touch of apt sympathy, standing now, as he did, quite alone as a protesting minister. Mr. Allan had been called away before. When he came home he mentioned, with grateful pleasure, the satisfying portion given him at Mr. McPherson's grave. We did not know it then, but less than twelve months more and his course, too, was to be completed.

After Mr. McPherson's death, Mr. Ross was led to seek the co-operation of an aged minister, Rev. Robert McKay, formerly of Shakespeare, who had taken strong ground against the basis of 1861. His services were highly appreciated by the dissenting congregation in East Williams; and he, at much self-sacrifice, has nobly ministered to them ever since, in the midst of the infirmities of uncommon old age.

There is another matter of great importance to Mr. Ross connected with the London, Huron and Bruce Railway.

It was in the month of February, 1882, that a train was run past Brucefield on the Sabbath. Though ill-pleased at such a desecration, Mr. Ross did not take action upon it until, on the next Sabbath, at nearly the same hour, it went up again. Though he was at the time in the midst of public worship, his attention was caught, as well as that of the whole congregation, by the whistle and roar with which it thundered past the village. He paused at once in the service, and then appealed to the congregation.

"What are you going to do," he said, "in vindication of God's right to His own day? Are you going to allow the railway to fling defiance in God's face at your very doors? *What* are you going to DO?"

The appeal entered as an arrow into the heart of one of Mr. Ross's elders, Mr. Forrest. As soon as Monday morning gave him an opportunity he began to investigate what action could be taken. It was still early in the day when he came down to the manse to take counsel with his minister upon a plan of operations. It was agreed that there must be a public meeting called, to which the general Christian public should be invited, and all the neighboring ministers, that the situation might be carefully discussed and unitedly met.

When the meeting gathered, and had been properly constituted, Mr. Ross stated the case as it appeared to him, and the matter was ready for discussion or suggestion. One of the neighboring ministers made an irrelevant speech. The sum of it was the littleness of Brucefield and the bigness of the giant with which she was attempting to measure herself. One flash of George Walker's wit settled that speech, and the meeting took up the subject right earnestly. Mr. McMillan, a Christian magistrate in whose opinion all present had the utmost confidence, explained the defect in the law as it now stands, making it illegal to interfere with a train in its course, even though its employees would be

otherwise open to arrest as guilty of a breach of the Sabbath law. He read the statutes on the subject and made it quite plain that, though the Sabbath law is the law of the land, yet there are railway laws which interfere with the action of the Sabbath law in the case of employees at work on a train in its course. He also explained that, such being the case, any attempt to arrest the men working on a train, as it passed through Brucefield, would lead to heavy damages and defeat instead of victory.

Such being the present state of the law, it was unanimously agreed that steps must be taken at once to petition Parliament to change it.

There was no time to be lost. The latest date at which petitions would be received for the session of Parliament then sitting was very near. A form of petition was promptly drawn out, and a letter to accompany it, and Mr. Ross went at once to Seaforth to have them printed by thousands. Then our house for days was turned into a sort of post office establishment. Mr. Forrest and other friends kindly came in to help, for there were addresses to write, parcels to do up, and last, though scarcely least, innumerable stamps to put on. In a remarkably short space of time the forms of petition were off to the ministers all over Canada, along with the following letter :

SEAFORTH, March 7th, 1882.

DEAR SIR,—

If you approve of the object of the accompanying petition, will you please take such steps as you may deem best to get as many signatures attached thereto as possible, and forward the same to the Member of the House of Commons who represents your constituency. It is desirable that the matter be before the House of Commons as soon as possible.

Yours respectfully,

A. D. McDONALD,
JOHN ROSS.

The printing and postage, amounting to $32, he quietly and characteristically paid himself; worked earnestly in our own locality for a numerous signature; by letter and personal calls, acted as he was able upon ministers at various points along the line; and then watched for results.

One thing certainly followed. A third train made its trip on the third Sabbath, but that was the last for years. It may scarcely seem proven that the stopping of the train was the consequence of the agitation emanating from Brucefield, and yet it would scarcely be faith to question it. Prayer was made without ceasing unto God concerning this thing, and it was answered. Whether God answered the Brucefield prayers by means of the Brucefield efforts, or apart from these, does not matter very much. But the fact is clear. So soon as Zion really grappled with the monster, the monster, for a time at least, became still.

It was not till the Sabbath before Mr. Ross's death that a train was again run through Brucefield on the Lord's Day. The next week at the same hour, it again went up, and a third time a week later. Mr. Ross was not now here to do as he had done before; but those in sympathy with him did what they could. Letters were sent to the *Globe* and local papers, and a legal query to the *London Advertiser*. The latter asked what power the law allowed the Christian public in arresting railway employees as violating the law against Sabbath labor. The answer was given in the legal column, and stated, that no arrest could be made while the train was on its course; but, before leaving its starting point, railway hands could be arrested like any other workmen if found violating the law concerning Sabbath labor. The Sabbath train ceased to run, and as far as known to me has never since been put on.

May it not be that railway companies are like children, quick to detect the difference between a wish to stop them and a *purpose* to do so. It is obvious to those dealing with children, how gloriously they will override mere wishes, however vehemently or angrily expressed.

But when they detect the tone of purpose, there is a change of tactics. Purpose is an unknown quantity, and, unless the temptation is strong, most are unwilling to run counter to it. Railway companies do know that it only requires purpose on the part of the Christian population of the land to close their Sabbath traffic forever. But the Christian Church has no purpose in the matter, and even wishes on the subject are weakening. What will she say to her Lord when He makes enquiry after the blood of the thousands of employees who could have been protected in their Sabbaths, who should have been protected in their Sabbaths, but who were not? While the people are "busy here and there," building beautiful churches and playing heavenly music, behold, the young men are gone! slipped soul and body under the wheels of the Sabbath trains.

It may not be out of place to close this chapter with a charge left by my own father to his children and their descendants. It will then be seen that Mr. Ross's children have a double hereditary interest in the precious Sabbath Day. "Let them regard it." Perhaps there are other Christian parents who may catch the idea and leave a like solemn "bequest of love" behind them, that the blessed authoritative Sabbath slip not entirely out of our land.

"For those I love, my children and their sons
And daughters, and for theirs again, as long
As they shall find a place on earth, I wish,
I earnestly desire, that they may own,
And keep, and honor, and abide in thee,
Thou Day of Heaven—thou minister of good!
Be this their Heritage—this their Entail—
Their great distinction this—their glory this!
This is my will this my bequest of love!
Let them regard it. If those lines should meet
Their eyes when I am silent in the dust,
O let them ponder well my words—my prayer,
My oft-repeated prayer for them, and turn
To Sabbath sanctity and Sabbath law.
Let them forsake what else they may, but not
The Day of Rest, or its congenial Truth.
The earth is all before them. Let them go
Where hope or fancy points; but let them not

Forget the Day that leads to bliss on high!
In poverty or riches, grief or joy,
In honor or obscurity, in town
Or country, still let them revere the Day
Of sanctity and sacred thought! 'Twill prove
Their shelter from the blandishments of time,
Nor less their strength beneath its certain ills.
O ye who bear my name to other years—
Ye loved ones, listen! disregard not one
Who fain would see you all in garments pure
And beautiful beyond the stars! Attend
And hear me! for I would repeat my wish
In token of my urgency: it is,
That you may know in truth the King Most High,
And dwell amid the lessons of the Day
That lifts the heart to Him.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

IN the following conversation, given wholly from memory, and which embodies indeed the substance of more than one conversation, Mr. Ross is made to give, as far as possible in his own way, his views of the Second Coming of Christ. The special conversation referred to was commenced by a young friend asking him if he favored the pre-millennial or the post-millennial theory.

"Many years ago," he said, "my mind was much taken up with the subject. I examined every passage I could find in the Old Testament or the New bearing upon it, and made them out into two lists, ranged one against the other—those seeming to favor the pre-millennial idea, and those that told the other way. Yet in view of the whole my judgment inclined strongly against the pre-millennialists, though there was one verse in their favor that I was not then able to explain —the one in II. Thessalonians that speaks of the end of the 'Man of Sin,' 'Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.'

"But the more I have thought of the subject, the more I have become dissatisfied with both the ordinary views. The post-millennial theory makes much of the Bible meaningless, and takes the ring of cheer out of Christ's parting words, 'Surely I come quickly.' The pre-millennial idea of a visible coming at that time in the clouds of heaven, and reigning in person in Jerusalem surrounded by His risen saints, springs, I think, from a confusion of ideas—a mixing of two

things that ought to be kept distinct. Let me explain my meaning."

The speaker, as was often the case when deeply interested, had been walking up and down the room talking eagerly to his attentive listener. Now he paused beside the table and laid his finger significantly upon three successive points in its surface.

"I find," he said, "in carefully studying the Word of God, not merely two, but *three* distinct 'comings' of the Son of Man.

"His First Coming," laying his finger again upon the first point in the tablecloth, "was foretold as a time of humiliation, suffering and death.

"But there is a Second Coming," laying his finger upon a second spot, "which is foretold with marvellous fulness, and in a great variety of passages. It is the coming which immediately precedes the Millennium. Concerning Him at this Second Coming it is announced that 'He shall smite all nations with the sword that proceedeth out of His mouth;' that He shall 'consume' Antichrist 'with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming;' that under His leadership 'the kingdom, and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven' shall be given to the 'people of the saints of the Most High.' Then shall the earth be 'covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.' Then shall the 'law go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' Then the Bible shall be the world's statute-book, and the Sermon on the Mount the handbook of common law. This is Christ's Second Coming. This is when the 'stone cut out of the mountain without hands' shall 'smite the image upon his feet, which are of iron and clay, and break them in pieces'—when the ten kingdoms of modern Europe shall become 'like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, and the wind shall carry them away, that no place shall be found for them,' but the stone that did it 'shall become a great mountain and fill the whole earth.' This is the Second Coming of

Christ, of which the Bible is full and for which we are all to watch.

"But," he added with energy, "there is a Third Coming, a coming to judgment, 'in the clouds of heaven,' 'with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God,' when the 'dead in Christ shall rise first' and shall 'meet the Lord in the air,' to be immediately joined by the saints then living, when all shall be gathered before the great white throne, that the books may be opened, and all judged according to their works. That is His third or final coming.

"Now the Jews, in watching for Christ's first coming, made their mistake by losing sight of the lowly and sorrowfully significant predictions that described that first coming, and fastening their eye entirely upon the glorious promises concerning the victorious Second Coming. The pre-millennialists, as it seems to me, make the similar mistake of reading into these promises of the second the peculiar features that belong only to the third or final coming. But the mass of post-millennialites have lost the Second Coming altogether.

The young questioner had listened with the deepest interest.

"Then in what sense," he asked, "do you expect Him to come the second time?"

The animated walk up and down the room recommenced as Mr. Ross replied:

"Not this time in the literal, visible sense. He will come as He came last time, in such a way that the Church itself, except those few who may be watching, shall not know Him. You will find this Second Coming given in vision in the 19th of Rev.: 'And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war." If you study the whole passage I think you will be satisfied that this rider is not the Lord Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, to gather his saints to a personal meeting in the air; but it is Christ going forth to conquer this old rebellious world to Himself. Christ *as the Word of God*, with the

sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth. The day is coming, and it is not far off, when to those who are watching He shall so shine into His own word, and His glory shall so shine out of it, that that word shall be to them as though their visible Lord was walking at their side—yes, more than that. It only needs that a very small percentage of His professed followers should be awakened to the fact that the word of God is *the Word of God*, that every command in it is a command of God, every promise a promise of our infinitely faithful God, every threat a threat of the living God who cannot lie and cannot fail, to put such power into them that nothing shall be impossible unto them. It only needs that a very small percentage of His people should spend one week under the full force of the word so realized, and the results in the Church and in the world would be tremendous. But let Him who is in His own person the Word of God put Himself at the head of those upon whom He has so made His word to shine out, and lead them on to definite conflict with the Church and with the world, and there would be such conflict and such victory as was never dreamed of before.

"I know," he added, "something of what I am talking about. The power the Word of God has at times over my own soul is, I believe, a foretaste of that which is coming soon in full force, to those who are watching, and ready to follow Him who rides forth with the sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth.

"And do you think," enquired his friend, "that the conflict will be with the Church as well as with the world?"

"When Christ came the first time," was the answer, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Unless I am much mistaken, when He comes the second time the Church will be just as unprepared as it was eighteen hundred years ago. Jesus Christ Himself almost indicates as much when he asks the question "When the Son of Man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?" Christians generally will not know Him, will not like Him, and will most certainly fight against

Him. A remnant will be filled with His Word and Spirit as never, except in the rarest instances, has been the case before; but they will be counted bands of enthusiasts, hypocrites or fools. But they will really be bands of heroes, every one of them such as David was when he ran to meet Goliath. They will then do in earnest what every one of us should be doing now. They will be doing the will of God in earth *as it is done in heaven.*

"But what do you think would the Churches do with such men? Tell me," he said, facing round upon his listener, with a countenance full of amusement as well as earnestness, "What would your big congregation at home do with a dozen such men? If, during this next week, twelve men amongst you should be so filled with the Word and Spirit of Christ, that their words and actions were all such as though Christ Himself were living and acting in every one of them; if, by example and direct appeal, they kept pressing home upon fellow-Christians that nothing short of this living out the principles and spirit of Jesus Christ could be called Christianity at all, and if the sharp sword accompanied both word and example, making them tell upon the joints and marrow—*what would be the effect upon the congregation?*"

"I do not know what the effect would be," replied the young man somewhat meditatively, "but," he added with some emphasis, "I believe they would be exceedingly unpopular."

"Unpopular? The Churches as they are now would never put up with such men in their midst. The whole Church would soon be broken to pieces and ready to be whirled away with the rest of the great image, 'like the chaff of the summer threshing floor.' The genuine elements in all the Churches would soon gather round those Spirit filled men and become like them, while the remainder would either become openly infidel, or continue as the emptiest shells without even the semblance of a kernel.

"Yet what have these twelve men done? Neither

more nor less than this: They have, in terms of the 2nd Psalm, 'Kissed the Son.' They have yielded themselves to Him in loving and entire surrender, in yielding themselves to His now illuminated word in implicit faith and unreserved obedience. They are simply accepting the position of members of Christ's body, which certainly implies yielding to the most minute control of Him who undoubtedly is or ought to be the Head of His own body. They are simply, but actually, living out the doctrine of the *Headship of Christ over His own Church.* Do you know?" he added with great animation, "that the principles which produced the Disruption are the very principles which, as things appear to me, shall introduce the Millennium?"

"That is a very interesting idea, and gives dignity to the contendings of the Church of Scotland that I never suspected before. But, you speak of principles. The Headship of Christ over the Church, that is one. What is the other?"

"The Headship of Christ over the *nations*," with emphasis. "These are the two principles for which the true Church of Scotland has contended all through her history, and these are the two principles which shall not only introduce but maintain the Kingdom of Christ in its Millennial glory all through to the end. Look at the 19th of Revelation. You will find them both there, and both in such a very prominent position that they are given as the two published *names* of the Divine Rider. His name is called *The Word of God.* In going forth to do battle under that name, He certainly goes to bring a people under positive and unreserved subjection to the Word of God, and that is simply asserting and establishing His own absolute Headship over them. But He has another conspicuous name. 'He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written *King of Kings* and *Lord of Lords.*' In going forth to do battle under that name, He certainly goes to bring kings and their kingdoms under positive and unreserved subjection to Himself, and to Himself as *The Word of God.* And so real is their subjection in the end, that He shall 'rule them with a rod

of iron.' If that is not asserting His Headship over the nations and winning it too, what is it? You can catch His tone towards the king of the earth in the gracious but authoritative counsel given to them in the 2nd Psalm, 'Be wise now therefore, O ye kings, be instructed ye judges of the earth, serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest He be angry and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.' But according to the prophetical pictures, no large proportion of the kings take this kindly counsel. At least there are many who do not. In the 110th Psalm the Lord is represented as striking through kings in the day of His wrath, and in Revelation the birds are invited to feast upon the flesh of kings and the flesh of captains. It must be either submit or perish that day."

"Then you think that Christ's people, under the invisible but actual Headship of Christ Himself, shall literally 'take the kingdom, and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven?'—that they shall assert and establish His right to control, not His Church only, but the whole world, according to the laws laid down in the Word of God?"

"That is it exactly. And it is quite possible that it shall be done according to established constitutional principles. Two things will probably go on together: 1st. The most tremendous political confusion and bloodshed, signs enough of which have for years been showing themselves; and 2nd. The quickening, consolidation and marvellous growth of that inner Church scattered all throughout the present visible Church—the actual gathering together of those 'armies of heaven' on 'white horses' going out after the august Rider, who is their Leader. Now, remember these two forces will be at work together, death and destruction, making awful havoc of human life on the one side, and a present though invisible Lord developing beauty and power and numbers on the other.

"Take your own city. Fasten your eyes on it, and watch the necessary consequences of the continued action of these two forces. Soon 'the people of saints

of the Most High' would be in the majority, and, once there, what would they do? Would they not quickly fill all the municipal offices not merely with respectable, moral men, but with men after God's own heart? From the mayor down to the policemen parading the streets the uppermost thought of each officer would be how, in the wisest and most effectual way, he could rid the city of every temptation to iniquity, and bring all its institutions and inhabitants up to the closest accord with the Word of God. Let these two forces work on through the whole world, and you see what the necessary consequences would be, and without anything we call a miracle, excepting this, the complete subjection of Christ's people to His Word.

"But it will be a time of tremendous conflict. The Devil will fight for every inch of ground. The victory will be gained simply because 'greater is He that is with us than he that is with them.' It will again be a trial of strength between the Son of God and the god of this world."

"I see. Once Jesus Christ is established as actual Head over His own Church, that Church, under His leadership, shall have purpose and power enough, perhaps by the ordinary machinery of constitutional government, to establish Him as King of all the kings and governments of the world?"

"Yes. The whole Millennium springs from the Church being brought actually to yield to the Headship of Christ over herself; and it culminates and continues by the world being brought, by means of that now loyal Church, actually to submit to the Headship of Christ over the nations."

There was a pause of some minutes, during which both were thinking. The silence was broken by the questioner.

"What do you understand by the first resurrection, Revelation xx.: 4, 5, 6?"

"That passage stumbled me for some time, and I am not prepared to pronounce dogmatically upon it yet. This is the only explanation I can offer. I will not say

it satisfies me; still, it comes much nearer to that than the view held by the pre-millennialists.

"During that thousand years Christ will be actual King over the whole earth, King of its kings as well as over His own Church. But He will govern—not visibly in His own person, but by means of some constitutional government in each country. Whether the chief magistrate in any given kingdom be a king or a president will not matter; he will really execute the duties of a lieutenant-governor under the Lord Jesus Christ. The office of legislators will be to work out the principles laid down in the Word of God to the special circumstances of the people over whom they are appointed; the work of judges, to apply the laws so made to special cases. Who, during the thousand years, shall occupy these 'thrones of judgment?' Men in the very spirit and power of the apostles themselves. The heroes and martyrs of old shall all, as it were, come back again, not now to be the 'offscouring of the earth,' but to be the leaders of the people, to 'live and reign with Christ a thousand years.' A Martin Luther shall again, but effectually this time, rein in the Germans to do the will of God 'as it is done in heaven.' A John Calvin shall be chief magistrate in France, and mould that whole nation as he never was able to control Geneva. A John Knox shall take the reins of the British Empire, if it outlasts the earthquakes of the preceding years, and work out the constitution of the ideal Church of Christ, with no Queen Mary to fight against him. Queen Mary shall remain in her grave. 'The rest of the dead live not again till the thousand years are fulfilled.'

"But I see," he added, "that you cannot quite accept this?"

"I cannot say that it quite satisfies me. The words are so explicit."

"Let me give you a parallel instance, and it may help you to see that there is reasonableness in the view and precedent for it.

"You know the promise in the last of Malachi,

'Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.' That is explicit, yet how has it been fulfilled? Not by the sending down of the actual body and soul that went up to heaven in the fiery chariot, but by giving a son to Zacharias and Elisabeth in their old age, and by giving him enduement of the Spirit of God like to that bestowed upon the ancient prophet, so that in God's sight he stepped forth among men verily another Elijah. Is not that a fair precedent for the interpretation I have just put upon the 'first resurrection?'"

The young man seemed deeply interested. He mused a little and then looked up.

"What passages would you suggest that I should study that I may get clearer views of this matter?"

"Study the whole Bible, and mark the passages for yourself. The book is full of them.

> 'All the promises do travail
> With a glorious day of grace.'

Study the Psalms—the second, the twenty-first, the forty-fifth, the forty-sixth and forty-seventh; the seventy-second and the one hundred and tenth. The second Psalm will be the war-song when that day of battle comes, and there is no note of fear in it. The one hundred and tenth is very interesting. You will find it is just another account of the same vision given in the nineteenth of Revelation. There are the King, the army, the enemies, the slaughter and the victory, all the same in both. But there is a difference, and a significant one. The King, who is represented in Revelation as riding forth at the head of His army, is shown in the Psalm, not as doing battle in His own person, but seated at God's right hand, using the power of His Melchizedek priesthood. In Revelation He is represented, not merely as the Leader of the hosts, but *as the only one who is fighting*. His army follows Him on white horses, clothed in linen white and clean, while He is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood. He is the only one who draws blood from the enemy. But in the Psalm we are

led to suppose that the hosts of young people willingly offering themselves are the fighters, while the King, at God's right hand, secures victory by His intercession, as Melchizedek did for Abraham and his army of three hundred household servants, though in the fifth verse you cannot but see that the poet leaps beyond his figure, and makes the King at the right hand the real fighter, after all.

"Isaiah is full of it, and so is Daniel. But the last chapter of Malachi is well worth studying. Will you turn to it?"

The leaves were rapidly turned.

"Look over that chapter. To what does it refer?"

"I always thought that it referred to the First Coming of Jesus Christ."

"The opening of the third chapter gives His First Coming; the two messengers, Elias and Jesus Himself. This chapter refers, I think, rather to the Second Coming, except the closing promise, which, I am persuaded, belongs to both."

"Then this verse, 'But unto you that fear my name shall the Son of righteousness arise with healing in His wings—' you think that is not yet fulfilled?"

"Not in its fulness. Christ is to His Church now 'the bright and the morning star.' By faith we bask in His beams as the 'Son of righteousness' even now, just as by faith His people of old could rejoice in the perfect salvation of the coming Messiah. But the day of the revelation of Jesus Christ will be to our present day, like the rising of the sun in his strength to the suggestive shining of the morning star."

"In what sense do you think the promise of Elijah refers to both the First and the Second Coming? Are you expecting Elijah again?"

"That suggests a story in connection with my first discovery of the double significance of that passage." Here the speaker, who was in one of his happiest conversational moods, settled himself back in his chair to tell the story.

"For many years as you know, we held a sort of

ministerial association in Brucefield. Our meetings were mostly held here, though sometimes we went elsewhere. Our special object was to keep up our knowledge of the original languages, and to interchange thoughts about passages of Scripture or any other matter of mutual interest. On one of these occasions I was giving with much enthusiasm a view that was entirely new to me. I had been struck with Christ's answer when the disciples asked Him, 'Why say scribes that Elias must first come?' 'Elias truly shall first come and restore all things. But I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed.' It struck me that Christ here makes two statements, in one of which He uses the future tense, and in the other, the past or its equivalent. It seemed to me this may mean that there shall be an Elias before His Second Coming as there was before His First. Elias has come, and they have killed him, but Elias *shall come* and restore all things. I was very eager, for I saw a point that I had never seen before.

"Mr. ——, of ——, had been listening among the rest with all apparent attention, but, when I paused for opinions upon the thought advanced he responded—

"'O yes. John the Baptist was Elias before Christ's *First* Coming, and *John Ross* is to be Elias before His *Second* Coming.'

"It was only a bit of humor, but it was humor where I wanted and had expected seriousness, and it pierced like a hornet's sting. I dropped the subject at once. When the laugh subsided the conversation drifted into other channels. I do not suppose that Mr. —— had the slightest idea that he had annoyed me. But I was more than annoyed. His words rankled in my spirit for days.

"One evening soon after I was here in my study. It was late. I was on my knees, and dropped asleep in that position; or at least we may call it a sleep. While in that condition, the door appeared to open, and a visitor came in. He was a heavenly visitor, and he held in His arms bundles and bundles of spiritual blessings.

He advanced, holding them out to me in the act of giving.

"Overflowing with joy and gratitude I was opening my arms to receive them when he said:

"Is there not enough here for you and Mr. —— both?"

"My heart did not respond to the suggestion, and I replied:

"Oh, I want them all, I want them all. And besides," (for the truth must come out under those eyes that were reading my very soul.) "Besides, he said to me what he had no right to say." (The next words of the heavenly visitor the writer cannot remember, but the drift of them may be gathered from the answer given as the outstretched arms were filled with the bundles of blessings.)

"'Oh, there is abundance, abundance for us both,' and with that I awoke and the rankling was entirely gone."

After a little conversation over the story, the young man came back to the subject under discussion.

"And when do you think these things shall come to pass?"

"I have never studied dates, not perhaps as much as I should, but the time is surely drawing near, perhaps very near. As the history of the world is now moving on at such a tremendous rate, it may be upon us before we think. We know it will take the world by surprise when it does come, and there is much cause for fear that it will take the Church by surprise as well. The condition of things in Europe, with every nation armed to the teeth, is exactly such as you would expect when God was preparing them to be broken to pieces together like the chaff of the summer threshing floor. The condition of things in the churches, as viewed through the centuries by the eye that sees the end from the beginning, would readily suggest the question, 'When the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?' The five wise virgins and the five foolish ones are all pretty much sleeping together. The preaching of the

Gospel in so many lands now, and the present condition of the Turkish Empire, are all signs of the near approach of the time. I am not prepared to go closer than that."

"There is one more question I would like to ask, and then I think I am through. Is it your opinion that during the Millennium the world's whole population shall be wholly Christian?"

"That is nowhere stated, and the positive statements made scarcely seem compatable with such a state of things. It is said of this Rider on the white horse that, with the sword that proceedeth out of His mouth, He shall smite the nations and *rule them with a rod of iron.* If all the ungodly were either to perish under the 'smiting,' or to become true Christians, so that at the end of it there were none left but His own, it is scarcely a rod of iron that would be required 'to rule them.' The essential difference between the state of the world now and its state then will be: 1st. Jesus Christ, as the Word of God, will be the actual Head of His Church, and consequently that Church will be full of men and women, such as to suggest the figure that all the old saints and martyrs have risen again. 2nd. The forces of evil, though as positively evil as ever, will have lost their head, for the Old Serpent shall have been bound with a chain and cast into the bottomless pit. Then there may be a 3rd. The majorities may be reserved, partly through the destruction of life during the preceding conflict, and partly through mighty accessions to the Church during the same period; for 'when thy judgments are abroad, the inhabitants of the earth will learn righteousness.' Now imagine these majorities, under the invisible but real leadership of Jesus Christ by means of officers like Peter and Paul and Calvin and Knox, governing the whole world according to God's laws laid down in the Bible, you can well understand that the minorities of evildoers will feel themselves in very truth 'ruled with a rod of iron.'

"There is another statement made which implies that the whole population will not be truly Christian. At the end, when Satan is loosed for a little season, he

goes out to deceive the nations, and to gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. You can understand that he will not find it difficult to deceive and lead out his own ; but you cannot imagine how he could gather such an army where everyone was a true believer."

"Then you do not think that the Church, during the Millennium, will have an easy time of it?"

"An easy time of it? Tell me, have *you* an easy time of it now in your own soul to "cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ?' That, as a Christian, is your object, and the weapons given you are mighty through God to the doing of it. But do you find it *easy?* Christ in you, the Head of the new nature, occupies the same position that, as Head of His own now loyal Church, He will occupy in the world during the Millennium. In both cases there is a Divine Head leading the majority. But *you* find that the evil minority in you gives the majority plenty to do. You must not think that the unchanged forces of evil will unresistingly yield obedience to the 'rod of iron' that compels outward submission and reformation. Then every child that comes into the world will be born with the totally depraved nature it inherits from Adam, and so will be a little kingdom to win for Christ. Truly, if my ideas are correct, faith and zeal will not need to rust for want of exercise. But then Christians, like their Lord, shall not fail nor be discouraged. Why? Because, as our own Mackay of Formosa has it even now, 'Because *Jesus Christ, my King, is God the Creator,* and because *God means every word He says.*' Do you see how Jesus Christ as *The Word of God* has already shined out upon him with something of His Millennial glory? And see what a man it has made of Him."

"Then you believe that even now some of that Millennial power is possible to His people?"

"Yes. The Sun of Righteousness will shortly rise upon those that fear His name, with healing in His

wings. But He has been just below the horizon for the last eighteen hundred years, and many a shaft of light has shot up into the Eastern sky. He has shined with the sure hope of the Morning Star into the heart of every true believer; but some who have been watching have, by faith, caught the better sunlight right from His own face. Then you have a Paul, an Augustine, a David Brainerd, or a W. C. Burns. Dr. Mackay's words give the key to it: 'Because Jesus Christ, my King, is God the Creator, and because God means every word He says.' That is just a glimpse of the Rider upon the white horse whose name is called 'The Word of God.'"

The young visitor rose to go. "Thank you," he said, "for this talk. The subject is much deeper than I thought, much wider than I thought. There is much more in the Bible about it than I had any idea of. It is well worth further study."

NOTE.

There is another very important point that should have had a place in the foregoing discussion. That is the restoration of Israel, and the place it is to hold in the final establishment of Jesus Christ as King over the whole earth. The actual restoration of God's covenanted ancient people to their Messiah and their land was most pronouncedly held by Mr. Ross. I well remember the vehemence with which he argued the point with an honored friend who had given his opinion against it. He has explained his view of the matter somewhat in this way:

"God's promises to His ancient people are like man himself, made up of body and spirit. The literal signification is the body. The spiritual signification suggested by the literal is the spirit. These promises in their literal meaning belong to the literal Zion. These same promises in their larger, richer, spiritual signification belong to His whole spiritual Zion, and to the members of the literal Zion only as its members are actually therein included. But the literal fulfilment

to the literal people will be the most conspicuous feature in the world's Millennial history, and will prove to the end of Time such an exhibition of God's covenant faithfulness and resources as shall constitute a strength and a song to the spiritual Israel everywhere."

Concerning the difficulties which seem to some insurmountable in the way of the literal restoration of God's ancient people, he dealt with them as Abraham did with his own old age and Sarah's as possible hindrances to God's keeping His promise to them of a son—he "considered not" the difficulties; he "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform." This exceedingly reasonable "persuasion" is perfectly adequate yet to lay the demon of unbelief on whatever point he may make his attack.

Closer than this I do not care to go. Though seeing his position on this subject in the main, I have not the details clearly enough to work it into the foregoing without drawing upon my own thinkings rather than upon my recollections, and that is not what I have at present undertaken to do.

CHAPTER XV.

SUNSET LIGHTS AND SHADOWS.

THERE is a peculiar sweetness about the recollections of that last winter, 1886-87. Our cup was very full of blessings. With buoyant physical health in every member of the household, an attached people, a newly fitted up home, a superabundant supply for every temporal want, a consciousness of our Father's present care and a happy confidence for the future,—is it any wonder that many joyful songs went up from the old manse? Again and again during that winter my feeling found expression in two lines of the thirtieth Psalm:

> "O God, Thou hast my mountain made
> To stand strong by Thy love."

It suited me exactly; for the "mountain" seemed so strong, and there was so much love fencing it round from trouble at the base and crowning it with rainbow tints at the top. I knew perfectly well the verses that followed, and felt the note of warning that was in them. But it did not make me afraid, for I was made to realize that, even if a stroke should come, there would be as much love in the stroke as there was in the quietness. It was so pleasant to leap over these verses with all the testing they might contain and fasten again upon the eleventh verse:

> "Thou turnèd hast my sadness
> To dancing; yea, my sackcloth loosed,
> And girded me with gladness
> That sing Thy praise my glory may,
> And never silent be.
> O Lord my God, for evermore
> I will give thanks to Thee."

And then I would think happily of the injunction: "In the day of prosperity, *be joyful*."

There was a mellowness of spirit about Mr. Ross that was felt at the time, and can be felt still in the few recollections that remain.

In the month of November he paid his usual visit to the Ashfield congregation. He was met at the station by a friend, but did not seem in a conversational humor. They drove in silence for a considerable time; at last Mr. Ross spoke:

"Do you know," he said, "I was at a ball last night?"

His companion understood him very well, and simply waited for whatever explanation might be coming.

"Last night," he continued, "Mrs. Ross went up with the children to the village, where they are attending a singing class. After a while I felt the house lonely. I put on my coat and went out, expecting to meet them about half-way home. But they were detained longer than I thought, and I had reached the village before I knew. As I was passing Dixon's Hall I noticed it lighted up and full of music and company. The thought came strongly in upon me to go and give them a word. When I appeared among them, there was something of a panic and manifestly a measure of scattering, though many of them looked bold enough. I read them texts just as they met me; but in a few minutes the proprietor came up and politely asked me to stop, as I was spoiling the dancing. I did so at once and withdrew. But," he added earnestly, "I cannot help thinking the Lord has purposes of mercy for some of these young people, from the liberty I had in prayer for them when I came home."

During the week of prayer for 1887, union meetings were held in turn in the three Brucefield churches, the Methodist and the two Presbyterian. These were much enjoyed by many,—so much so, that, in response to a very general desire, they were continued through the second week. There was peace throughout the borders. The very kindest relations existed between the three ministers—Mr. Simpson, recently inducted into the

Union Church, Mr. Smith, of the Methodist, and Mr. Ross.

Among the many precious things heard during these meetings, only one impressed itself so that it can be distinctly recalled. We were in the Methodist Church, and, when Mr. Ross was called upon to address the meeting, he read the closing verses of the fourth chapter of Mark: "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow; and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?"

The two thoughts impressed by that short address were the unreasonableness and the troublesomeness of unbelieving fears. If Jesus Christ is not God, He should not be trusted at all; but if He is God, He merits implicit trust. He merits trust whatever His action may be—whether He shows Himself strong for our help, or seems to be asleep while we are in trouble. There is more honor done to Jesus Christ by holding fast our confidence in the midst of the storm, than in wild prayers that will take nothing short of His waking up and saying to the billows: Peace, be still. But the troublesomeness of these fears was the prominent thought. On this occasion they broke the only sleep that is recorded of the Man of Sorrows. Sleep is sweet to the weary, and these unbelieving fears cost Christ the loss of that precious refreshing. The impression left upon the mind was that the unreasonable unbelieving fears of His people are to this day a trouble to the Lord. They are a tax upon His patience. Not an overtax, because His patience, like all His other attributes, is infinite. But these fears are a sore strain upon His patience. The rebuke given to the trembling disciples was sent home to each one who frets under Christ's seeming carelessness of his trouble. "*Why* are ye so fearful? How is

it that ye have no *faith?*" But I cannot find in my attempted report what I did find in Mr. Ross's address, a clear exhibition of the pledged and omnipotent love of Him who seemed to be asleep. Perhaps the tardiness of Christ's response to the call of Martha and Mary when their brother was sick unto death exhibits best the Christward side of the seeming carelessness of Him who sleeps when we are in the storm.

In the month of January Mr. Ross was again expected at Ashfield. He was to start by the Saturday morning train and be met at Ripley in the afternoon. But that Friday in the north was one of those memorable storms that bear the name of blizzard in the Northwest. Long before the close of the day Mr. Alexander McKenzie, who had taken charge of meeting the minister at the station, saw all too plainly that it was going to be impossible to do so, let Saturday's weather prove what it might. What was to be done? He knew perfectly well that no weather actualities or possibilities would prevent Mr. Ross coming. Nothing but a direct message conveying word of the real state of matters would be sufficient. He was some miles from the nearest telegraph office, but he saw plainly that that must be reached and notification sent. Mr. McKenzie is a powerful Highlander, with the very qualities of body and soul that would have fitted him for service under General Havelock, so he resolutely set his face to defy the storm above and the drifts below, and carry the message on foot. But it would not do. The strength of the storm and the depth of the piles of packed snow were too much, and most unwillingly he found it necessary to turn back. But he would not give it up. Mr. Ross must get word. Towards evening the storm somewhat slackened, and its diminished fury allowed him breath to push his way through the drifts, and reach at last the telegraph office—late, but not too late for the message still to go.

But, whatever was the difficulty, the message that had cost so much to send did not get through in time to prevent the journey. The storm had calmed by

Saturday morning, and Mr. Ross started with the 10 o'clock train. It was about 2 p.m. when he reached Ripley, but found, of course, no one to meet him. He hired a man with a cutter to take him as far as he could, though forewarned that that would not be far. The main road was broken after a fashion, and he followed that for a mile and a quarter. Then he came to the turn where he must strike off into the country. The road presented an unbroken stretch of undulating snowdrifts. Evidently the horse could go no farther. But Mr. Ross never thought of turning back. Though carrying a valise and burdened with his heavy racoon-skin coat, he bade good-bye to the driver, and set his face to a tramp that would have staggered the resolution and the strength of many a young man. Five miles of unbroken snow lay between him and his destination. It was 9 o'clock at night when at length he knocked at Mr. McKenzie's door, "hungry," as he said afterwards, "with the sort of hunger that made me feel as if I was a boy again out trout-fishing."

His friend was amazed and shocked to think of the trial to which the strength of his beloved minister had been put. He expressed his regret and disappointment that the message had not reached him.

"It is better as it is," replied Mr. Ross, with great heartiness. "I am not at all sure it would have stopped me if it had come." He was in the best of spirits—tired, of course, but with the healthy weariness that is quite different from the broken weariness that comes from an overstrain.

There was only a handful of people out at the service Sabbath morning, for the roads were still unbroken and word had gone round that Mr. Ross was not to be expected. But there was a full house at night. The text given out was Christ's solemn question, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" There was power with the word that night. The littleness of time and the vastness of eternity, and the fool's bargain that the most successful worldling makes, became realities to the consciousness of those present.

One young man, a stranger from the States, was present. He had been visiting friends, and had set his heart on leaving for his own home on the day the storm commenced. He was determined not to be hindered; but the storm was too strong for him, and the journey proved impossible. He was deeply impressed by the message delivered that night in the little frame church. Never before had he so realized the tremendousness of the interests hanging upon the use made of the few short years here that we call life. His heart was turned to the Word of God as his counsellor and the City of God as his goal. He was then in ordinary health, but only a few weeks later was stricken with his final illness. He lingered a few months. To the last the Bible was constantly in his hands or under his pillow. Sometimes, during those days and nights of pain and oppression, he would look up at his wife and say, "I would like to have a talk with Mr. Ross." But that was now impossible. The powerful voice that had been used to deliver to him the King's message was then hushed in the stillness that shall be broken only by the royal summons of the resurrection morning.

Mr. Ross's return journey to Ripley Station was also performed on foot, for the roads were still unbroken; but a stout young man accompanied him this time, to help break the path and relieve him of his valise. When he came home he was as well and cheerful as when he went away, only a little tired, but that soon wore off.

The next month, February, he went as usual to Kincardine Township. He had a cold when he started, and endured a drenching, bitterly cold drive of eight miles from Kincardine Station to his destination. The kindest care that night could not remove the effects. He was oppressed with an uncommonly severe headache the next day; and when he came home on Monday evening I was touched to see how wearied and ill he looked.

But the spirit that paid no heed to weather or drifts, paid just as little heed to physical unfitness for work. Though not in his usual buoyant spirits, he continued at his ordinary duties through the week.

There was at that time one special soul for whose enlightenment and salvation his heart was much drawn out in prayer. He came to me one evening with the earnest request.

"Will you help me," he said, "to pray for Mr. ——? I want to prevail for his salvation."

Just before the last journey to Kincardine, he had received an important communication. He could not attend to it before going away, but, as soon as he felt a little rested after coming home he looked for the letter that he might do so. To his great perplexity he could not find it. For hours, as he found time, he searched for that letter. It was a serious matter, for he needed it not only as a guide to his answer, but even the address of his correspondent was unknown to him without it. On the Saturday morning it came to me like a dream that he had found the missing missive. When he awakened, I asked him if it were true.

"Yes," he said, "I searched a good while, and then the thought came all at once, what a fool I was to go on blind when I might as well have the benefit of eyes that saw it exactly where it was lying. I kneeled down and put my trouble before God, then I arose and walked straight to that shelf," pointing to it, "and took it out from under a pile of books."

I have seen many beautiful answers to prayer while in Mr. Ross's company, but nothing that so distinctly exhibited in ordinary things the direct providential guiding that was a continual experience while turning over the leaves of his Bible.

The next morning, Sabbath, February 27th, was very cold and stormy. He seemed unusually unwilling to rise, but had not a word or a thought about staying home from church, though he consented at my earnest suggestion to announce that there would be no evening meeting. His text that day was Matt. v. 13. "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men."

He brought out one very serious thought which was new to me. A church which is losing its savor may be trodden under foot *as salt*, by the very numbers and wealth in which she is glorying. Mere worldly numbers and worldly wealth inside a church are nothing less than an alien army introduced within her walls by the enemy himself for the very purpose of treading under foot of men whatever semblance of true salt may remain.

His voice, which was pretty clear at first, roughened very perceptibly before the close of the service. He attempted in the afternoon to reach Elgie's schoolhouse, where he was to preach. But he came home after having gone about half-way, saying, "I was afraid, even if I did get through, that the road would be so filled up during the service that I might not be able to get back again." Such fears did not belong to John Ross. But there was a weight upon his chest that gave him a new and strange sense of weakness to contend with difficulties, and he turned and came home and laid down his armor.

* On the following Monday he was oppressed with a heavy cough and severe headache, and towards evening a strong fever set in. On Tuesday morning the doctor was called. He pronounced it an attack of inflammation of the lungs. Remedies were applied so efficiently that the disease steadily abated, and Saturday was a day of grateful gladness, rejoicing over his manifest and rapid recovery. Looking back over those days of seeming recovery I can now see indications that even then his thoughts were turned to a possible near call into eternity. But something during the Saturday evening must have confirmed the previous impression almost to a certainty. His peculiarly expressive eye assumed a look of seriousness—a far away look—which I understand now, though then I did not. This same look was there every time he awoke through the night, and continued through the

* The account of the closing scene is taken from a letter written immediately after it occurred. In a few points it has been extended a little, but the near standpoint from which it was then viewed has not been altered.

next day. His every word and action that Sabbath day, his determination to rise and go to the house of prayer, his disappointment when prevented, his tenderness throughout, the peculiar spirituality of many of his words and expressions, and the continuance of that deeply serious look in his eyes, are all in keeping with the conviction that he felt himself to be but a few steps from another world. Yet he had been up and dressed and going about all day, and he conducted family worship before retiring for the night. The Psalm he gave out was the forty-first; but he significantly began the singing at the last verse of the preceding Psalm, the fortieth, thus marking that verse with peculiar emphasis as an expression of his own feeling:

> "I'm poor and needy, yet the Lord
> Of me a care doth take;
> Thou art my help and Saviour,
> O God, no tarrying make."

The passages he directed us to read were: John XXI.: from the nineteenth verse to the end; Acts I.: 8-11, Acts II.: 24-31, and Acts VII.: 55 and 56. The significance of these passages as they must have appeared to him is now so plain that I cannot help wondering at my own blindness in seeing nothing of it at the time. The first opens with the words, "This spake He, signifying by what death He should glorify God" The second gives Christ's ascension, and the message of the two men in white apparel, telling that He should so come again in like manner as they had seen Him go into heaven. The third speaks of the flesh of the Lord Jesus resting in the grave in hope, and seeing no corruption—the hope crowned by the triumphant resurrection. The fourth gives Stephen's vision into the open heaven, and his sight of the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

At the close of worship he said to me:

"Do you remember how, two or three times during the past week I have read to people at my bedside, 'Let all my saints together be unto me gathered.' When

God sends me that word He means to gather some of His own to Himself. It may be me."

He meant to prepare me for what he felt was coming; but my eye was not looking that way, and I refused to be afraid; I felt sure he was getting better.

He ate with much relish a supper of porridge and milk. When eating it he looked up brightly and said:

"You see God is fulfilling to me the words we have been singing, 'And in his sickness sore, O Lord, thou all his bed wilt turn.' That means sick bed mercies."

It was not an hour after when the pain in the side set in again with such violence that none of the remedies hitherto used seemed to have the least power to subdue it. About two o'clock in the morning we sent again for the doctor. While waiting for his coming I said:

"Papa, did you ever suffer like this before?" He answered:

"I never knew that I could suffer like this before, and so I never was afraid of it."

After that night of terrible pain, Monday was spent in a long, almost unbroken sleep. Towards evening he awoke, spent and feverish. Several friends, learning that his case was now very serious, gathered in. As the night advanced, he asked that family worship should be conducted in his presence. He took the Bible himself, opened it, and handed it to Mr. Benjamin Higgins, asking him to read. It was the 19th of Rev., from the 11th verse—the vision of Christ as the Word of God riding out at the head of the armies of heaven, to put forth His millennial power and subdue the world to Himself.

Mr. George Walker and Mr. John McDonald, tried and trusted friends, stayed with us during the night, which was spent in restlessness and wandering. Soon after the Tuesday morning broke, bright and spring-like, the restlessness and wandering both ceased, but a distressing labor for breath began. Breathing was such an effort and speech evidently so difficult that conversation was out of the question, but every now and then a sentence would be pronounced or words of prayer heard,

so that we could to some extent mark his footsteps as he "walked through the valley of the shadow of death."

About ten o'clock he repeated the text, "Be still and know that I am God." Then turning his head to Mr. Forrest, who was at his bedside, he said, "Didn't I use to preach that to you?" The unspoken personal application evidently was, "I have preached it; now it is for me to do it—to be still and know that He is God."

A little later he said to the same friend, "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth"—but either from failure of memory or from want of breath for so long a speech, he left the verse unfinished, and continued, "'Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.' This is true for official duty as well as for personal salvation." The verse he had meant to give was this, "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain."

I was standing by his pillow, and he said, "To God the Lord belongeth the whole earth." My answer did not satisfy him, for he turned a quick look into my face and said, "Why don't *you* take hold of that?" I did not see his point at the time, and he did not feel able to explain. But I have since been much touched in looking up the expression to find that the one coming nearest to it is this, "For thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: the God of the whole earth shall He be called."

So suddenly and unexpectedly had death come upon us that the children had scarcely began to be afraid till that morning. Bessie's heart was sinking. To him she had always clung with a remarkable attachment, and he had the tenderest sympathy with her. She felt as if he must not go, he could not go, she could never let him go. After seeking feebly to comfort her I went back to his room, eager for a message from him. After sitting a little in silence, timid to break in upon thoughts that I felt were going out to a present God,

I took his hand and said, "Papa, Bessie's heart is breaking. Can you give me a message for her?" He did not answer for some seconds. I almost thought he was not going to answer, when he said distinctly, as a message to his sorrowing little daughter, "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from this place," and added after a slight pause, "'I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee.'"

To Anna he gave part of Solomon's charge to his son. "Keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother; bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck." As the words impress me, it was not his own commandment, nor mine, that he charged upon the heart of his child. It was a blessing similar to that put by Jacob upon the two sons of Joseph. "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." He was passing on, with the love and authority of a dying father, the Word that had "redeemed him from all evil" to be her constant companion and guide through life.

His third little daughter he took by the hand, and, looking at her with his heart in his eyes, said to her, "O my little daughter, Maggie, seek the Lord Jesus Christ; and remember that *He has power to draw your heart quite over to Himself.*"

His little boy David would come occasionally into the room, look his wonder at Papa and the tokens of sorrow around, and then go quietly out again. On one of these occasions his father's eyes followed him and his lips murmured the words I was so glad to hear. "O God, make him strong, and spare him, and make him strong to do much work for Christ in the world."

A little after that I heard his voice in whispered prayer, but could not catch all the words: "O Lord, —my house—never leave them, never forsake them. The blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it. Never let them become vain, for that will bring Thy wrath upon them for that sin. Give them to hold fast to Thy promises," and later, "—bear

with me—every breath—disquiet them as little as may be," and again, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on iniquity," and again—"Christ the King."

So eagerly was I watching for every word, that I fear my watchfulness had troubled him, for after that he used the Gaelic, and so got once more into his closet and shut the door behind him.

Little Ellie, the baby, came in, as she often had done through his illness, and stood at the bedside. He held out his hand and grasped the little hand and wrist. "O little Ellie," he said, "and so Papa is to go away and leave you all." The child still stayed. His eyes sought mine, and I understood their message. He had a little parcel of conversation lozenges on the bureau from which she had often been supplied before. I arose and gave her one. She showed it as usual to her father, and he, knowing the matter of interest, said in something of his old way: "What's on it?" When I had read to her the words she went away well pleased. Even then, with eternity full in view, he could think for the innocent amusement of his little playfellow.

Several of his dear people, stricken with the common sorrow that was falling upon us all, came in for one brief, parting word. To each he gave a text. As one of these entered the room, he took her hand with the old cordial grasp and said in his old way: "Are you well?" His next word was: "This is a special call to me from the Lord. Be making ready. 'Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life.'"

Shortly after this, he was lying back on his pillows with his eyes closed. His breath was very heavy and short, and the sentence came almost by jerks: "I am now come—to the point—when a man is fit—for nothing in the world—but to glorify God – by *dying* to Him." It is sweet to connect this expression with the first verse we had read at worship on Sabbath evening. "This spake He signifying by what death he should glorify God." It seemed to me then, and it does yet, the most satisfying way to put death that I had ever heard. It

was just the thought to strengthen him, drawn as it was from God's own Word.

Toward the end I was standing watching the terribly labored breathing, and fearing with a dread which must be felt to be understood, the pains and dying struggles that might yet intervene before the "silver cord would be loosed." "The prayer of the destitute," went up to heaven in these words, "Father, into Thy hand I commit his spirit, and his every dying breath." Right down from heaven came a thought that never could have originated in my own heart—"And He loves him a *thousand times* more than I do." This illustration of what I had just done followed swift as a flash. It was as though some one whose heart yearned over my own little Ellie should lift her up and place her tenderly in my arms and say, "Be very careful that no hurt touches her." Such an injunction, I knew, though entirely unnecessary, would be kindly received and most carefully carried out. I saw at once that what was so precious in my eyes was far more precious in His, and would be managed in the very best way. A great calm came into my heart instead of the dread.

His death-song was part of the last verse of the one hundred and thirty-eighth Psalm. He motioned for his glasses, and, having adjusted them, I gave him a large printed Psalm book. He opened it and read out the words :

> "Surely that which concerneth me
> The Lord will *perfect* make."

The peculiar, glad voice in which he rang out the word "perfect" I can never forget. Then he glanced up into my face and added : "*Perfect*, mamma ; *that's it.*" Twice after that, with some interval between, he repeated the words, the last time not long before his power of speech ceased. That last time he added some words which I did not fully catch, but which referred to the making perfect again even of the body that was now being taken down. Those familiar with him in prayer can scarcely have failed to notice how often he used the expression, as though it comprehended much that he

wanted to ask, "Perfect that which concerneth us," and it was one of God's beautiful love-tokens that He gave him this word to rest upon just then.

The last words that I can distinctly recall were given in a manner peculiarly his own, and in a voice more like his usual than almost any of the labored expressions that had preceded it: "*Man's* righteousness! *human* righteousness! to go into *that* Presence! The best of it is *ghastly*, *deathly*, like himself."

The last breath was drawn about seven o'clock in the evening, and, graciously for those about his bedside, there was neither a groan nor a twitch of a muscle. He literally "fell asleep in Jesus."

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." What is precious in His eyes may justly be precious in ours, and it may not be out of place thus to speak of the details. Had his experiences been more of the joyful and triumphant kind I would have had more scruples about exhibiting them, for these have always been the exception, and are more likely to discourage the weak and timid than to cheer them. But his is the death of one who loved his home and grieved to leave it, who loved his work and would gladly stay and do it, who felt that the burdens he was leaving behind were too heavy for the shoulders upon which they were to fall, and of one, moreover, who realized his own utter unworthiness, and the glorious holiness of the God into whose presence he was about to enter, as comparatively few ever seem to do, and yet he was enabled "to behave and quiet himself as a child that is weaned of his mother; his soul was like a weaned child," before the simple word of the Lord, "Be still, and know that I am God." It was no ecstasy of heavenly glory that gave him courage to meet the last enemy—only two lines of a psalm, but they were enough. In death, as in life, the Word of God was sufficient. It was such a simple experience, that of a little child before his father—to submit to God's appointment and to rest upon His promise. The effect upon my own heart has

been so quieting and cheering, I would gladly be the means of extending the blessed influence to others.

That was a wonderful evening, after all had been done that could be done, and the friends, stricken mourners like ourselves, had withdrawn. I went into a room where two of the little girls had been put to bed. One was asleep, but the other was wide awake, with her eyes full of quiet tears, looking up to the ceiling. As I entered the room, she sprang up in bed, her little face radiant with joy. She threw her arms around my neck while the tears rained down her cheeks, and she said, "O mamma, I was just thinking *how happy* papa is now."

Was ever sweeter comfort given? Yes, better still was in store. As I lay down that night, thinking what had come upon us, this thought came powerfully into my soul: "God has taken away the father from our house to-night, *but He undertakes Himself to occupy the place He has thus made empty. Can* I think that the household or any member of it shall ever be the poorer for the change?" And so, accepting God as our *household resting-place*, I fell asleep.

In no other matters have I realized the preciousness of this household resting-place as in guidance in perplexity, and in the control and management of the children. When in difficulty as to the control and proper guidance of the six strong-willed, energetic children left upon my care, this thought has been a tower of strength to me. If their father were here, I could draw upon him to the fullest extent for the management of these children. His resources, being finite, might not always prove adequate, but *all he had* would be at my disposal. He who has taken the father's place to this household has infinite resources of love and wisdom and power, and *all his resources, by the terms of the arrangement*, are at my disposal. When cast down and disquieted with faults that were too strong for me, this has been an abundantly satisfying song, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? *Hope thou in*

God, for *I shall yet praise Him* for the *help* of *His countenance.*" This too, has transformed fears into confidence. "Fear *not*, *for* I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring." But perhaps there is no other verse that has given a better *hold* than this: "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." It is a low place to take, but it is a position of power, to point to one of our children and say: "Here is a thorn, Lord; let me have the fir-tree, that it may be to thee for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Most gladly would I comfort others with the comfort wherewith I have, in answer to the many, many prayers that went up for Mr. Ross's family, been comforted of God."

The Word of God is wonderful in its power to fit and satisfy every craving of the human heart. None know this better than those who have been made desolate by bereavement. During the first week after Mr. Ross was taken from our midst, one thought often fell upon me with a chill. I knew the dear friend who had gone from our midst had gone to be "with Christ, which is far better." I could rejoice in his joy and thank God for it. But through all that sometimes a little chill—jealous feeling—would come up: "He will be so taken up with the glories of heaven that the little Brucefield home he used to love so much may be less in his eyes than it used to be." I could be patient to lose his visible presence, but to lose the old place in his heart—that was more than I could give up, even to heaven, without pain. There was no disposition to find fault that it should be so. Indeed, I could not see very well how it could be anything else. But the thought gave a dreary feeling of being left behind.

I do not remember praying about this feeling. It was scarcely, perhaps, well enough defined for that. There was certainly no expectation of comfort in the

matter : it was left among the "all things" that surely work for good, and that would be understood later, but not now. One morning that first week we were reading at family worship, following the course that had been started while Mr. Ross was with us. The chapter we had was the second of 1. Thessalonians. As we read the seventeenth verse, some words in it flashed through my soul in a way that startled me : "Being taken from you for a short time in presence, *not in heart.*" I saw at once in them what I had not been even looking for, a perfect answer to my chilling thought. They came to me as a complete description of Mr. Ross's real attitude towards the little home of which he had been the centre : "Being taken from you for a short time in presence, *not in heart.*"

There is no argument in this—no proof whatever. To many it may seem nothing more than coincidence. To me it was the Spirit of God using the Word of God to comfort with solid truth. I would lovingly pass it on, again "comforting others with the comfort wherewith I have been comforted of God." I see it plainly now. Nearness to the Lord Jesus makes us love our friends more, not less. What, then, must be the effect of dwelling in His presence.

But another trouble took deeper hold still. So suddenly had death come that there had been no opportunity for a parting talk. Precious parting words had been received that last sad day, but there were some things my heart ached to say that I could not mention then. As time passed, the desire for one more half-hour with him became stronger, not weaker : sometimes it came with a force that made me almost afraid.

When this yearning was at its height, a sweet thought took possession of me : "I cannot speak to Mr. Ross, but I *can* speak to the Lord Jesus Christ, and tell Him all I want to say. Mr. Ross is right *in His* presence. If He pleases He can pass my messages on, and, if not, it is *all right.*" I kneeled down and told Him all. I did not ask Him to deliver the messages, but simply to do with them exactly as He thought best.

When I rose to my feet the burden was entirely gone, and it has never come back any more. Whether my messages were delivered or not I do not know, and do not wish to know. They were given into the heart of a living Friend who would do the very best thing with them, and *that* is *enough.*

For some time I felt as if this was too sacred a matter to be mentioned. But the comfort given to my own soul has been so sweet that it has not seemed fair to keep it all to myself. If, through the pages of this book, it may bring living comfort home to others by leading them to "pour out their heart" before the Lord, then blessing and praise shall be the result.

He "fell asleep" on Tuesday, the 8th of March. The funeral was on the following Thursday. The company that gathered to pay the last tribute of respect was unprecedentedly large. Eleven ministers, representing the Baptist and Methodist bodies as well as the Presbyterian, were present, and several others afterwards expressed regret that word had not reached them in time. The most vivid recollection I have of the touching services of that day is in connection with the singing of the closing verses of the ninetieth Psalm. Every word was satisfying, but my heart went up most of all in the last two lines:

> "Our handy-works establish thou,
> Establish them each one."

It was *his* handy-works I was praying for, that they might be accepted and established before Him, especially the costly testimony he had borne to the kingship of the King. The end of the story is not yet written, and no hand can write it but the hand of Him who sees the end from the beginning, and sees as well all the precious, Heaven-wrought links by which that beginning and end are effectually connected.

The body was laid in the old centre plot in the little graveyard close to the manse. It was placed alongside of the dust concerning which he had said years before:

"I have come to live in Brucefield, and I intend to

die in Brucefield. That body must lie here." His purpose in the matter was fulfilled to the letter.

A beautiful granite monument marks the spot, erected by his sorrowing congregation, assisted by friends who, unasked, sent in their offerings for the purpose. It bears this simple inscription :

JOHN ROSS,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL
IN BRUCEFIELD FOR
35 YEARS.

He fell asleep
March 8th, 1887,

Aged 65.

HIS DEATH-SONG.

" Surely that which concerneth me
The Lord will *perfect* make."

Below that is the nineteenth verse of the twenty-sixth of Isaiah, written as he loved to read it, dropping out two of the italicised words, and counting it the very voice of the risen Redeemer :

" Thy dead men shall live ; my dead body shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust ; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

The following document, received a few days after Mr. Ross's death, was gratefully appreciated at the time, and is of permanent value :

" At the usual Saturday
Conference of the Professors
and students of Knox College, held
on the 12th day of March, 1887,

attention having been called to the death of the Rev. John Ross, Brucefield, the following resolution was

unanimously adopted and ordered to be transmitted to his widow and family as expressive of the sentiments of the Conference, viz.:

"Whereas it has pleased the Great Head of the Church to call to Himself the Rev. John Ross, of Brucefield, an honored *alumnus* of Knox College, this Conference of Professors and students desire to record their sense of the loss which they and the Church have sustained by his removal.

"His generous spirit, his high gifts and attainments, and his earnest and singularly elevated personal piety, have secured for his name a place of special honor in the College where he studied, and indeed in the estimation of all who knew him. It is matter of peculiar thankfulness, at this hour, for the Conference to know that while diversity of opinion, in reference to an important ecclesiastical movement, prevented their brother from continuing to walk in outward fellowship with his early associates, this diversity was never allowed either to weaken the ties which bound him in Christian love to his brethren or to cast a cloud over the esteem, confidence and love which they cherished towards him. Indeed the many important ecclesiastical discussions in which he took a conspicuous part seemed to endear him to brethren from whom he differed. For he possessed the gift, granted only to a few of the great and good, of eliminating from controversies those personal elements which tend to embitter, and of lifting discussions up into a region where all feel that they are dealing solely with questions of principle.

"This Conference, while they bow submissively to the will of their Heavenly Father, who has seen fit to call their departed brother from a life of varied usefulness on earth to the higher service of the upper sanctuary, desire to tender to his widow and family their cordial sympathy with them under their severe bereavement, and they pray that the God of all grace may pour into their hearts the rich consolations of the Gospel and give them to experience the fulfilment of the precious promises made to them in His Word.

"In the name and on behalf of the Conference of the Professors and students of Knox College.

"(Signed) Wm. Caven,
Wm. Gregg,
Wm. McLaren,
R. G. Thompson,
C. Gordon,
J. McD. Duncan.

"Toronto, 15th March, 1887."

It may not be out of place to give extracts from a few of the many private letters received at the same time:

"For your husband I have always entertained the highest esteem and respect. Indeed no one could know him well who did not admire and love him for his Christian worth, his stern and loyal adherence to principle, and his kindly affection towards all, and especially to those who were of the household of faith."

"During the earlier years of my ministry we were thrown much together; and I learned both to love and reverence him. His grasp of Divine truth and the nobility of his character always deeply impressed me. . . . His unexpected removal brings back the past to me very vividly, and I feel that I have sustained a personal loss. He was a friend whom I could trust as I could few others."

"I had long known Mr. Ross, even while he was a student. Some years ago, a good many now, he, on several occasions, spent some days under our roof, when the children were young. He manifested a great interest in them; and they were very fond of him, sometimes going out to the woods with him. All who knew him loved him, and respected—I might say revered—him, as indeed a man of God."

"In common with all who had the privilege of knowing Mr. Ross, I had marked his profound and constant

sense of the divine presence, his entire consecration to the service of God, his devotion to truth and courage in its defence, his unselfishness and unworldliness and his love of the brethren. Faithfully has he served his Lord and Saviour in all the days of his ministry, and now he is with Christ, which is far better. He will ever be remembered with veneration and love by his brethren in the ministry, and to many others to whom he has spoken God's message. To have enjoyed for so many years the services of one who lived so near to God, and to whom the things of the kingdom were living realities was, indeed, a high privilege and a great responsibility, and we cannot doubt that many will call him blessed in that day."

The following is a touching little testimony, perfectly in keeping with all his ways :

"We all have very pleasant recollections of Mr. Ross's last visit to the North Easthope manse. He held my hand in bidding good-bye, and his last words were, "'Seek Him more and more.'"

The next is from Dr. Mackay, of Formosa :

"I was so glad to read about the Lord's faithful and brave servant. Truly he died as he lived. I cannot put on paper my admiration for him. Though we did not correspond, I never, never forgot him and our sweet visit with you all when in Canada."

Perhaps I may be excused for adding a more public testimony from the same hand. It appears in that spirit-stirring book, "From Far Formosa," in an account of the farewell meeting in Woodstock in 1881. The closing sentence shows the generous estimation of a friend indeed.

"When I think of that farewell meeting, there stand out against the background of loving memory the form and features of Oxford's greatest son, the late Rev. John Ross, of Brucefield, whose life of faith was to me an inspiration, and whose labor of love the Canadian Church ought not to forget."

CHAPTER XVI.

CLOSING HISTORY OF MR. ROSS'S CONGREGATION.

IT is important to state what has become of the congregation that sustained Mr. Ross so heartily in his protest. Many expected that, as soon as he was gone, they would place themselves in the hands of the Presbytery. But there was scarcely a thought in that direction. For seven years they continued to maintain their distinct, though unobtrusive, protest, and then, by a congregational vote, they decided to disband, and thus terminate, but not vitiate, their peculiar testimony.. There was an attempt made to lead them instead, to apply as a congregation for admission into the Presbytery. This, it was felt by most, would have been to have repudiated by one act the position held so long at such cost—it would have been a repetition of the very fault of which they had held the Free Church guilty, and against which they had been thus protesting. She came out of the Church of Scotland that she might testify unequivocally to the Kingship of her King. "That generation had not passed away," when she dropped her peculiar testimony in order to join hands with the very party who had, in her eyes, been guilty of repudiating the sole Kingship of that King. Neither had there been, in the meantime, even a semblance of a repudiation of that repudiation. For the Brucefield congregation, after maintaining their testimony for twenty years against the Union basis, suddenly to drop that testimony in order to join hands with the very party against whose unfaithfulness they had been protesting, that party having, in the meantime, in no sense repudiated the action complained of, would

have been to do exactly what they had during those twenty years been condemning in others.

While proposals of this sort were under consideration, my own mind was much perplexed. There seemed to be no counsellor amongst us that could make clear what was the right thing to do. To my own opinions, not principles, I had learned to attach small importance having seen more than once that my own ideas of duty were not identical with what was afterwards clearly realized to be Divine guidance. At the close of a Sabbath service, several of the managers stayed to receive information I had been commissioned to obtain. We all felt our need of a sure counsellor. If only Mr. Ross could have come in amongst us and told us what to do, what a relief it would have been! I walked home sadly, feeling, perhaps more than I would have dared to express, as if the little flock had been forgotten, fearing lest it had in any way alienated its Shepherd. It was a bright afternoon in early spring, and the sunshine beaming about the old manse door is vivid in memory yet. As my foot touched the threshhold, a verse recently committed to memory by the children sounded through my soul with the quieting power of Christ's "*Peace, be still*," to the waters of the Sea of Galilee. "*Counsel* is *mine*, and *sound wisdom; I am* understanding; *I* have strength." Was it foolhardy to accept the Counsellor who so offered Himself, to count upon His guidance of the little flock? and to thank Him now for the guidance given as His own?

When, soon after, the other method was made plain to us, that of voluntarily disbanding, and so, as a congregation to die protesting, most of the people appreciated the difference at once—the difference between simply terminating a given form of testimony, and repudiating it. By a large majority this action was decided upon, not hastily, but most deliberately, the thing was done. Each member was thus left free to seek church connection where he thought best, as he would upon removing to another locality, carrying, if he chose, his protest with him.

Though a large majority of the congregation were

hearty in this action, a small minority was anxious to continue the old protest in the old way. A few of these have not yet sought connection with the united church, but quietly maintain their outstanding protest to the present time, meeting for worship every Lord's Day. Some are inclined to despise such persistency, calling it obstinacy. But if men understood better the seriousness of the interests involved, and the way God Himself guides and strengthens individual witnesses when He needs them, they would be slow to entertain such thoughts. Some who thus still maintain their outstanding protest may be inclined to condemn the majority who took a different course. That would be a mistake too. God may have had need of the public protest made by the disbanding of the congregation as truly as of the more private one they still maintain. The only safety is that each should take orders direct from the Captain of the Lord's hosts. The only rule regarding each other is the one laid down in the 14th of Romans: "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand."

CHAPTER XVII.

ANECDOTES.

THESE Anecdotes have failed to find an appropriate setting in the body of the book, but they contain too many characteristic touches to be left unused, and it has been thought well to give them as an additional chapter.

A DOOMED POT OF SUGAR.

As a lad John Ross was an adept at sugar-making, and was early trusted to carry through the whole process, even to the critical clarifying and "sugaring off." He was in the bush one day, boiling with all skill and diligence, for there was a heavy "run." In his eagerness to keep up with the liberality of the trees, he kept filling fresh sap into his kettle longer than was wise, and so was thrown quite late before he could get the day's boiling down to the required thickness. As the syrup got richer, of course it could not stand so furious a heat as before; and yet the eager boy, in his desire to get through, could not resist the temptation to pile up the fire and hasten as far as possible the longed for home going. Every time the heat rose too high, the syrup rose too high also and began to pour over into the fire. Moderation must rule and the heat be lessened, till impatience again worked up the fire past the proper point, and a repetition of the former experience was the result. Several times this happened, and at last, when he saw the provoking syrup rising again, he let both his temper and his tongue loose, and hurled out an imprecation at the whole potful of molasses, consigning it to destruction. The moment the fiery speech was out of his

mouth his heart smote him, and something within said to him that his word was taken, and to destruction by some route or other that whole day's boiling would go. Thoroughly sobered now, he slowly and patiently did his best to finish the work properly—let it have its time, stored it carefully in a tested basket, covered it securely from any chance cow, and went home with a weight on his heart. That, he knew, was righteously doomed syrup, and his impious word had doomed it.

Money would not have hired him the next day to go out and do the "sugaring off;" some other hand than his might finish the work that he had begun. He found some imperative duty demanding him elsewhere, and somebody else went out to the sugar bush. When the bucket was uncovered, behold! it was empty! A leak mended with tallow had been in its bottom. Though the tallow successfully resisted the cold sap with which the bucket had been carefully tested, the boiling syrup made short work of it; and, quicker than the boy guessed, his word was taken up, and the whole day's boiling leaked out and was soaked into the earth from which it came. To John Ross as a boy God was a present God, and right and wrong were realities.

CREATED BY HIM AND FOR HIM.

Thirty years later John Ross, not now of Zorra, but of Brucefield, was making a special study of the first chapter of Colossians, where Paul speaks of God the Father having "delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the Kingdom of *His dear Son.*" Then, as is common with Paul, at the mention of *that name*, he seems to get in a glow with love to it, and the following verses are full of Christ—the love and efficacy of His redemption, the dignity of His person, the complexity of His glory and power as Creator of all things. Then he crowns this section of his thought with the comprehensive statement, "All things were created by Him and for Him."

Mr. Ross had been following Paul's enthusiasm with sympathetic eagerness, and when he came to this

universal statement it thrilled him with a new and delightful thought: "Then *I* was created *for Him*." A further thought brought him to his feet as though in response to an electric touch, and he swung his arm over his head as he pronounced the words aloud:

"Then let me *be—for—Him!*"

Anyone knowing Mr. Ross will readily understand the power those two thoughts, coming as they did, would exert within him. The dignity of creation! *created—for—Jesus Christ!* The rush and joy of reconsecration! Then let me *be—for—Jesus Christ!* "Whosoever will" let him drink at this blessed fountain. All have an equal right here, for "*all* things were created *by* Him and *for* Him."

A WISE REPROVER UPON AN OBEDIENT EAR.

If Mr. Ross was ready to read a rebuke to others from the open page of his Book, he was quite as ready to read one to himself. An instance exhibiting this is given by a brother minister:

"On one occasion we were both appointed by Presbytery to visit certain districts. We entered a small house crowded with little children. Mr. Ross spoke rather slightingly of the large number of children. Nothing was said by me in reply. Some time after Mr. Ross said, with his Bible open in his hand: 'I spoke hastily and very wrongly of the children, for which I am rebuked. Listen to what God says about it,' and he read Psalm CXXVII.: 3 and to the end, 'Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward. As arrows are in the hand of the mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.'"

A similar case springs to my own memory. He had made an appointment to call on a young couple, that he might have conversation with them in reference to the baptism of their little daughter. The afternoon brought one of winter's furious storms, and the road to the

home expecting him was one which very rapidly filled up with drifts. Contrary to his custom, Mr. Ross decided that the weather was sufficient to justify his staying at home. Before settling down to his work for the afternoon he opened his Book, as was his wont, looking for a word from the Master. His eye fell upon the testimony borne to Paul and Barnabas in the letter of the apostles and elders sent to the Gentile Christians at Antioch, "Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." He caught the contrast in a moment. Paul and Barnabas had hazarded their lives for the Lord and His work; he had shrunk from the winter's wind. The effect upon him was that of the touch of a spur upon a spirited horse. A few minutes saw him ready for the road and off like a soldier at the word of command, not to hazard life—that was not threatened—but ready most loyally to give up comfort or self-will at the summons of the King.

ALL FLESH IS GRASS.

In circumstances peculiarly appropriate, though as usual he was himself entirely ignorant of the circumstances and their appropriateness, he turned to a lady who entered the parlor and asked her the question:

"If you were out in a meadow, and saw all the grass bending toward you, would you be very much elated?"

Not yet guessing what was coming, though knowing very well there was something behind the question, she answered simply:

"No, I do not think I would."

"Suppose you looked again, and saw all the grass bending away from you, would you be very much discouraged?"

Again she answered, though this time with an inkling of his meaning:

"No, I don't think I would at all."

"'All flesh is grass,'" he continued, evidently giving what had been the subject of his meditations in his walk up and down the parlor. "What is the sense of being

lifted up when men are pleased with you, or cast down when they turn their backs on you? 'All flesh is grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the *word of the Lord* abideth forever.'"

IN CONVERSATION WITH A PRIEST.

On one occasion Mr. Ross was travelling by boat in company with several other ministers and a Roman Catholic priest. A good deal of talk was going on, but he was in one of his meditative moods, and for some time did not join in it. A Methodist minister and the priest got into a somewhat wandering conversation that had a controversial strain in it. The priest was not long in dealing the favorite blow, asking how it could be, if Protestantism was right, that it could be divided into so many different sects, each one of which was certain that itself had the truth and all the others were in error.

"The Protestant denominations are one at heart," replied the minister, "they differ only in non-essentials."

"Would you be kind enough to give me a list of the non-essentials?" asked the priest.

The minister was more generous than theological in naming the non-essentials. When he had presented the long list the priest enquired if he thought all the different sects or their leaders would subscribe to each item of the list as being non-essential?

"No," replied the minister, "I do not think they would."

"Well, well," cried the priest triumphantly, "would you now give me the essentials?"

This brought Mr. Ross to his feet. Holding the Bible above his head, he answered the priest's question, "The *whole Bible* is essential."

"The whole Bible!" answered the priest sneeringly, "The *whole Bible!*"

"Yes," said Mr. Ross, "the *whole Bible.*" And then he carried the war into the enemy's camp by two well-aimed questions.

"You have stated that the Roman Catholic Church is now and always has been one and undivided. How do you account for the different ecclesiastical orders, from the wealthy Sulpician to the grasping Jesuit? You have also stated that the differences among Protestants have been the fruitful source of infidelity. In what country or countries of Europe, will you tell me, has infidelity made the greatest headway?"

These questions were put strongly, but not irritatingly, and they were not pushed. The priest was not ready with his answers, and did not seem anxious to continue the argument with this new opponent. The subject was dropped, and the talk became general.

When in the evening they reached their port, and all were preparing to leave the vessel, the priest came near and touched Mr. Ross's arm, and asked for a little further conversation. What was the special line of the talk that followed I do not know; but at its close, instead of being irritated, the priest was so pleased and interested that he asked Mr. Ross in the most cordial way to come with him and be his guest for the night. This was not possible in the circumstances, but it shows the spirit in which the two men parted.

BENEFIT OF A BLACK NECKTIE.

When Mr. Ross came home after Sabbath evening service, he was always in his happiest conversational humor. The exhilaration of the day's work was still upon him. He did not want to read, unless it was to pick up the Pilgrim's Progress which was often upon the table, and read and talk over John Bunyan's happy hits and strong Christian common sense; but that was simply conversation with a progressively suggestive theme. More frequently he would stretch himself out upon the sofa and give himself up to a chat. During one of those happy Sabbath evenings some link of association recalled a scene of the past:

"That reminds me," he said, "of a conversation I once had in the cars. I had on a black necktie, and without it I doubt if I could have accomplished my pur-

pose. The young man sitting in the same seat with me was engaged in looking after the telegraph machines along the road. We talked about his early life and home and friends. He was not very communicative; most of the talking was on my side; but he seemed inclined to humor my fancy, and give me briefly any information I asked.

"'Boys have great appetites,' I remarked, when the way had opened for it.

"'Yes, they have,' he replied with some emphasis.

"'You knew what it was to be hungry when dinner time came then?'

"'Yes, I did,' he answered.

"'Your father never offered you a stone instead of bread when you came in hungry, did he?'

"He shook his head, muttered 'no,' and turned again to his paper.

"The conversation now went in quite another direction, but after remarks passing back and forward for some time, I thought I saw my chance.

"'Your early home was near the sea?' I said.

"'Yes,' he answered, 'close by it.'

"'Fish would be no dainty with you then?'

"'No, but it was very good.'

"'Good for a hungry boy,' I said, 'and you would not have thanked your father if he had offered you a serpent instead of fish when you came in to dinner, would you?'

"'I shouldn't think I would,' he replied.

"Again the conversation turned directly to something else, but, after rambling about awhile, the egg and the scorpion came in too. I had been talking in an ordinary tone, but as soon as his answer was given to that, I spoke out solemnly, 'If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?'

"It was a complete surprise. He started visibly at the first word, but neither spoke after that for some miles; then he looked up.

"'You took me that time,' he said, 'you took me by a hair.'

"'There is something in it worth attending to,' I replied, and then rose and joined another group. Soon after he left the car with a very serious face."

"You never heard of him again?" I inquired.

"No, never. In such circumstances you must be content to sow. 'One soweth and another reapeth.'"

CHAPTER XVIII.

ECHOES OF PAST UTTERANCES.

"The only glorious thing about sin is the infinite wrath of God against it."

At a funeral.—"Who can measure the sinfulness of sin? Do you want to try to measure it? Look, then, at *death.* Look at the reign of death all down the ages, at the sickness and suffering and unutterable misery, the war and famine and jealousy and wrong that have made this world's history one long drawn-out *woe*—all that, and all that is yet to come, and all that eternity shall contain, are but the legitimate consequences of *one sin*, and that a sin the world would count a very trivial one. Who can measure the exceeding sinfulness of sin or weigh out its just penalty?"

"They talk of the Messianic Psalms. The Psalms are all Messianic. We have a Messianic Bible."

Preaching on Christ's power to subdue all things to Himself, he crowned a list of the things He is able to subdue, with this word, given with a tender expressiveness that went from the heart to the heart: "He is able to subdue *you.*"

At a revival meeting.—"This meeting reminds me of an apple tree in spring. It is covered with blossoms, and everyone of them looks fresh and beautiful. But before the summer is over how many little apples will

wither and fall off, and never be heard of in harvest at all. Which of us here to-night shall be like those little apples, withering and dropping off within the next few months? Only the grip of the Lord Jesus Christ can hold you up from that fate. Take up the prayer, 'Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.'"

At a prayer meeting.—"Cursed be the deceiver that hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing."

First it was shown that he comes under this curse who has youth to offer to God, and yet purposeth in his heart to offer only the dregs of his life. He, too, comes under the same curse who has powers of mind and body, influence among men, wealth or any other good gift, and yet offers to God only the smallest share of each that may satisfy his conscience, keeping the strength of them all for himself and for the world. "Cursed be the deceiver."

The subject was continued in words somewhat like the following:

"But these, though coming within the range of the text, are not its first meaning. That goes deeper. 'Cursed be the deceiver that hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth a corrupt thing.' 'That hath in his flock a male'—a 'male without blemish'—the sacrifice appointed of God, acceptable to Him because appointed, appointed because fitly representing Him who is called the 'Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.' Cursed was the Israelite who had in his flock the male without blemish legally representing Christ and yet offered to God in sacrifice anything else, be it in his own eyes worse or better. The same curse comes down upon every Gospel hearer now who has in his possession the knowledge of the Lamb slain on Calvary—a sacrifice perfect, sufficient, accepted—and yet who dares to come into God's presence with any other plea whatsoever. Abel's sacrifice was accepted because it was the one God had appointed, and it was appointed because it could

represent a dying Redeemer ; Cain's was rejected, not because it was poor of its kind (there is not a word of that), but because it was *not* the appointed bloody sacrifice—because there could have been no smelling of a sweet savor had its smoke gone up to Heaven. God has Himself given to us the very sacrifice He wants us to bring back to Him when we seek to draw near. He who makes mention of that sacrifice, and of that only, may come with boldness to the throne of grace. But he who brings any other whatsoever as a propitiation for sin or a ground of acceptance comes right under the thunder of this verse : 'Cursed be the deceiver who hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing.'"

Addressing very briefly the Sabbath School, he spoke of the testimony given to Jesus Christ at His baptism by the voice of the Father Himself.

"Hear," he said, "God's testimony to the Saviour whom He was making a free gift to this world of sinners : 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' What are you thinking about this free gift ? What is the answer you are sending back to heaven about Him ? Here is the answer the Father is watching to hear from every one of us : 'This is my beloved Saviour in whom I am well pleased.' Can you say it ? Will you say it ? He is God's free gift to the world. If you will have Him as your Saviour, take up God's words and send them back to Him. *This is my beloved Saviour in whom I am well pleased.* Then," he added with emphasis, "God and you are at one ; you have come to an agreement about the most important matter in the universe ; you are both well pleased with the Son of God ; there is peace between you."

It made a deep impression on me at the time, as presenting a wide open door for quick, responsive faith.

The voice from the Father : This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

The voice from whosoever will : This is my beloved Saviour in whom I am well pleased.

In similar circumstances he was speaking of Rom. 10: 8. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart."

"The question is, how shall we reach out to Jesus Christ so as to get hold of Him for our own salvation? Shall we go up to heaven after Him and bring Him down again? Shall we go down into the grave after Him and bring Him up again? You know we can do neither the one nor the other. What shall we do then that we may lay hold of Jesus Christ and His salvation? The answer is short and simple. '*The word* is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart.' Take hold of Christ's *word* and you have *Himself*. And the word *is* near. It is so near that it is in your very mouth. Sabbath School children, if you are not saved it will be because you have so little heart to receive Jesus Christ that you have refused to swallow the word of life that He has caused to be *put into your very mouth*."

He was visiting an aged man for whose Christian character he had a deep respect, though he had never yet applied for admission at the Lord's table. Finding him alone, Mr. Ross felt he had a good opportunity for a personal conversation.

"Mr. ——," he said, "what is your hope for eternity?"

He was not prepared for the prompt and sorrowful answer: "Mr. Ross, I have no hope."

His questioner was surprised and distressed. He sought earnestly to lead him to a child-like faith in Him who came to seek and to save the lost and ruined and hopeless. Every effort was met with a confession of inability and total helplessness.

"Mr. Ross," he said at last, "I can do nothing. I cannot repent of myself, I cannot believe of myself. I can do nothing but look to Him."

The minister caught at the word. "All right," he replied, "that is all I want you to do. Only take care that what God has joined together you do not put asunder. 'Look unto me and *be ye saved*.' That is the

way the Lord has put it. The '*look*' and salvation have been bound up together by His own hand, and published in His Word as going in company. You can do nothing but 'look to Him' and hope in His *published* Word of salvation to all who look."

At a prayer meeting.—The subject was the earlier part of the 11th of Heb. When the 16th verse was reached, "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city." The question was asked, "Why is God not ashamed to be called their God?" The answer was given somewhat as follows:

"Because *He hath prepared for them a city;* He hath prepared for them the very thing His promises had led them to hope for. If He had failed to do so, He would be ashamed to be called their God. But He is not ashamed, and never will be ashamed, to be called the God of any who build their hopes upon His promises. He has already prepared for every such hope a fulfilment 'exceeding abundant above what we ask or think.'"

His New Year's text on one occasion was the word from Jeremiah, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." He spoke strongly upon the mighty "*Yea*" with which the message begins.

"God's message to you this morning is, 'Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' Why does He say *Yea?* Did anybody say *Nay?* He knows the guilty, unbelieving human heart; and the stubborn *nay* that sounds up from its sinful depths whenever such a marvellous message of heavenly love asks for admission. 'I have loved thee,' God whispers. 'Nay, thou art angry with me,' is the answer He gets. How shall He word the message so as to win for it admission? He will begin it with His own mighty *Yea*, that the miserable human *nay* may wither in its presence; then the

word of everlasting love shall enter unhindered carrying life and joy and holy power along with it."

At the last communion over which Mr. Ross presided in Brucefield, he took as his text while fencing the table the startling word in I. Corinthians, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."

He spoke strongly of the Lord's Table as spread only for those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not for His enemies, nor for the indifferent, but only for those who own Him as their King and Friend and Redeemer, and who love Him accordingly. All such were made welcome to the Table of the Lord, but all others were given as their portion, *Anathema Maranatha*. Seriously and unhesitatingly the point was pressed home.

Then he paused, and in an altered tone addressed the people. "Perhaps," he said, "I have been troubling some of you whom the Lord does not wish me to trouble. Do you love the Lord or not? That is a point you find it difficult to settle. You blush to call the feeble affection you entertain towards Him by any such name as *love*. Is any one of you mourning at the present moment because your heart is so cold to Him who loved you to the death and beyond it? Let me tell you this for your comfort. The heart that grieves over its own coldness toward the Lord has *some* appreciation of Him. It is only the soul that sees Him to be worthy of much love that mourns over its own littleness of love. 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Take courage, poor, humbled soul. Thank God, not for the feebleness of your own love, but for the knowledge He has already given you of His well-beloved Son. Take courage. Drink deeper of His infinite love to you, and yours will flow out to Him in response, 'Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.'"

It was Thursday evening. He had come in on the evening train, and attended the prayer meeting before coming home. He looked tired, which was not usual

with him ; but, when he had given out his subject, he spoke with effect.

The passage was II. Samuel xxiii. 1-5—"the last words of David." The way he opened up the 5th verse was very beautiful and suggestive. "Although my house be not so with God ; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure ; for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although He make it not to grow."

He spoke of the covenant made, when God had given to David a promise, "I will build thee an house ;" and he had sealed it with the appropriating words of faith, "Do as thou hast said." He spoke of the glory of that covenant, the Son of David of New Testament times being in reality the sum and substance of it. He spoke of the assured certainty of it as sung in the 89th Psalm. God Himself referring to it under these terms, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the *sure* mercies of David." But the special thought brought out was David's deep satisfaction in the covenant—his evident heart-rest in that covenant, in spite of two very serious discouragements.

The covenant was one that guaranteed to him unimaginable glory—spiritual power and holiness—not as an individual, but as the founder of a *house*. When, as an old man, he now looks round upon his house, he does not find fulfilled in it these covenant glories. "Although my house be not so with God ; *yet* He hath made with me a covenant—this is all my salvation and all my desire." David evidently expresses dissatisfaction at the actual state of his house. But, in spite of unsatisfactory facts, his heart revels in the everlasting covenant itself.

But there was another discouraging point. David's covenant, he knew, like Esau's birthright, was yet for a long while to come. But this knowledge had an entirely different effect upon him from what it had upon Esau. That covenant he saw to be a seed—a marvellous, heavenly seed, charged with power and blessing for the people of Israel and the whole human race. So inestimably precious did that mighty seed appear in his eyes that

he sang of it one thousand years before it began to germinate. "This is all my salvation and all my desire, *although He make it not to grow.*"

The lesson conveyed was the appropriateness of exultant faith in God's bare covenant, even while its promises seem to lie as dead as seeds that have not begun to germinate, and seem also to be flatly contradicted by actual experience at every turn. Faith, in the teeth of facts, "Though He slay me (me, whom He has promised to save), yet will I trust in Him."

A powerful sermon was preached during the summer of '84, upon the first nine verses of the 2nd chapter of Haggai. No notes of it can be found among his books, so the outline can only be given from memory. The subject was: God's charge to the feeble builders of the second temple.

1st. There was the seemingly discouraging reference to the temple of former days, "This house in her first glory," and the humbling comparison between King Solomon's work and theirs.

2nd. There was God's triple charge in spite of discouragements, to "be strong and work,"—the charge to all classes—to the civil ruler, to the priest, and to the people.

But the strength of the sermon lay in the third division, devoted to the five encouragements given to the consciously feeble builders:

1st. Though few in number and scanty in resources, they are assured that that is not adequate cause for discouragement, for "*I am with you*, saith *the Lord of Hosts.*" Jesus Christ gives the same mighty assurance to the feeblest Christian worker now: "Lo, *I am with you*, even to the end of the world."

2nd. "My Spirit remaineth with you: *fear ye not.*" An Old Testament foreshadowing of the full glory of New Testament times. God's own judgment, which makes no mistakes, decides that the presence with them of His Spirit is adequate reason for the dismissal of *all their fears.* How much more shall Christian workers

now cast fear to the winds, enriched with the Pentecostal fulness of the Comforter's presence and power.

3rd. Though Solomon's Temple was so filled at its dedication with the visible glory of the Lord that the priests had to withdraw from the overwhelming effulgence, God assures His builders that greater honor than even this shall be given to the humble work of their hands. "The Desire of all nations shall come," the man Christ Jesus shall tread these courts. But the Desire of all nations *has* come. "Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart: *Be strong; fear not.*"

4th. But what of all these hopes and promises if means with which to execute the work should actually not be forthcoming? A band of captives with heavy taxes to pay could not expect to command wealth enough for the work. "The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts." That one text makes short work of financial difficulties, if builders are doing God's work at God's call and in God's name.

5th. "In this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts." Christ's finished salvation was proclaimed and believed in the courts of the very house these builders were now being encouraged to build. The Gospel of Christ, published by the power of the Spirit of Christ, was the fulfilling of this final promise: "In this place will I give peace." But temple or cathedral has no monopoly of this crowning glory. Wherever the Gospel is proclaimed in its purity and received in its simplicity, of that spot, whether it be a seat at the side of a well or a shanty in the backwoods, God hath said: "In this place will I give peace."

Be strong and work is God's charge to His little flock of real workers now, for God the Father is with you, God the Holy Ghost is with you, and God the Son is with you. The silver and the gold and all supplies requisite to the work are the property of the Triune God at whose call you undertake it, and the God-given result of your work shall be *peace*—"peace with God," the peace of God, the "peace that passeth understanding."

A few weeks before his removal from our midst Mr. Ross preached upon the text: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for him that sinneth not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it."

I have searched in vain for notes of this sermon. Its outline has slipped out of memory, but some of the thoughts brought out can never be forgotten. The sermon might be entitled, God's rule of conduct relative to my brother's sin.

Wherever God has laid down a rule; it is a Christian's duty and wisdom to find out what it is, and carefully to regulate his conduct by it. Christian, take heed! God has laid down a rule to guide us in this very serious matter. He has told us exactly what to do when we see our brother falling into sin.

Notice, first, *what God's rule is not:*

1st. *It is not* to pass the matter by as no business of mine. We are our brother's keepers. Our own skirts are not clear of sin if we fail to do what in us lies to help our brother out of sin.

2nd. *It is not* to set ourselves to pull the mote out of our brother's eye while a beam is in our own eye. Though my brother's sin is just cause of concern, it is not the first cause of concern. Though the power of Christ in me ought to be helpful to my brother's mote, it will prove utterly powerless in that direction unless it is first proving successful in regard to my own beam.

3rd. *It is not* to talk of my brother's sin to some one else. True, Christ-like "charity covereth a multitude of sins"—covers them from human eyes, but spreads them out in intercessory prayer before Divine Eyes that "cannot look on iniquity" but have searched out a plan whereby it can be put away.

But what is God's one rule of conduct when we see our brother sinning?

It is simply this: Tell God about it. The rule is given in three short words of one syllable each: "*Let Him ask.*" Tell God about it, pour out your heart before

Him, and take hold of His promise given in connection. For with the command God has linked a promise. "Let him ask, and *He shall give him life for him that sinneth.*"

Special attention was drawn to the first "*him*" contained in the terms of the promise. It is as though the *life* promised is to be given, not directly to the sinner, but *to the party praying, for* the sinner. Terms are not arranged by chance in the Word of God. Does not this indicate that, in praying for sinners we may expect the answer first in fresh supplies of appropriate grace in our own souls, fitting us to become a fountain of life to the soul for which we pray. "He shall give *him* life *for* him that sinneth." Unwillingness to accept this blessed position of a channel may absolutely hinder the answer to our prayer.

Where is fault-finding, where is evil speaking, where is discouragement, if God's rule is taken as the rule of life in this matter?

What about a sin which appears so indicative of utter hardness of heart that we cannot help counting it indeed a sin unto death? Mercifully, the imperative command is relaxed in that case. "There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it?" This exception tells in two directions. 1st. It relieves the conscience from the duty of prayer in cases where prayer is felt to be hopeless. 2nd. The fact that we are distinctly relieved from the duty of intercessory prayer in cases of this sort, reveals more plainly than it could otherwise have been done, how imperatively that duty is laid upon us in all ordinary cases.

Are we forbidden to pray in these seemingly hopeless cases? Not at all. We are free to pray for sinners of the darkest dye, as Jesus Himself did for His murderers. This exception does nothing more than relieve us from the necessity of considering it an imperative duty.

What are the causes of the wide-spread unfaithfulness concerning this rule?

1st. Actual ignorance of the existence of such a command. We need David's charge to Solomon con-

stantly sounded in our ears : "Keep and *seek for all* the commands of the Lord your God." It is needful, not only carefully to keep the commands that we do know, but also to *seek for* the commands we have heretofore missed.

2nd. But perhaps even a larger share of the blame must be laid to our God-dishonoring *unbelief*. Those who frankly believe the promise linked with it will learn to delight in the command.

(The following extracts from his note book may be given as further examples of Mr. Ross's habit of thinking on paper :)

Monday, December 20th, 1875.—Met now in two Bibles Luke XII. 37 : "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

A word of counsel and warning and encouragement to me. To be found watching is of all things in the world the most unlikely in my case. To be found sleeping is of all things the most likely; and how dangerous! It is quite sure if the Lord Himself will not awake me and keep me awake, set me to watch and keep me watching, that I shall be found asleep.

Think of the honor He shall put upon those servants whom He shall find watching.

1st. He shall gird Himself that He may serve them.

2nd. He shall make them sit down to meat that He may serve them.

3rd. He shall come forth Himself and serve them.

The Master will show His approval of their conduct, and His delight in His faithful and vigilant servants by His now serving them and honoring them, as the most distinguished guests are honored by him who extends the most courteous hospitality.

What is it to be found watching?

1st. It is to be found awake.

2nd. It is to be found sober.

3rd. It is to be found attentive to the matter concerning which they are to watch. If they forget, they are not watching; if they neglect they are not watching; if their mind is taken up with other things they are not watching. It will not do for the night watchman to have other work in hand.

4th. Self-denial is necessary in order to watchfulness.

5th. A serious apprehension of the importance of the matters entrusted to us is necessary in order to adequate watchfulness.

6th. A careful avoidance of the close companionship of those who are not watching is very important if we would be found watching. The society of the world is a great enemy of watchfulness.

What are the circumstances that make watching necessary?

1st. The presence of active enemies calls for watchfulness. This is emphatically our case.

2nd. The possession of something exceedingly precious, and of which we may be deprived, calls for watchfulness. This also is our case.

3rd. The approach of an important event, demanding careful preparation, and yet unknown as to date, calls for watchfulness. This belongs to our case.

4th. When a distinguished person is coming, and yet the time of His arrival is kept from us, we need to watch that we may be found ready at whatever time He may come. This, too, is our case.

"What I say unto you, I say unto all, *Watch.*"

Friday, December 31st, 1875.—"Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant." With this I had a word I have often met and greatly need as most suitable to my case. Psalm xxxi. 20: "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. Blessed be God, for He hath showed me His marvellous kindness in a strong city."

The pride of man and the strife of tongues are hard

to bear. They can go very far and do much harm, and disturb a man's peace greatly. Sad are the complainings in this same Psalm of what the Psalmist himself suffered from these causes. Pride rouses to envy, opposition, hatred, contempt. Pride sets the tongue loose to rail, mock and fling "sharp and bitter words." Pride gives rise to suspicion and evil surmisings; it is cruel and unrelenting. It is not easy for a man in a public position, and especially for a witness for God, to find a hiding place from the pride of man and from the strife of tongues. Where can he find it? Not in the world, unless he come to terms with the world and keep silence, abandoning his testimony. Man is a child of pride and the strife of tongues will rage. While men have power to use the tongue they cannot keep silence toward those who bear witness for God in their midst. But for those who fear God there is a hiding place, a pavilion in which He keeps them secretly from the strife of tongues, and that, too, the best place a man was ever in; that place is the "*secret of His presence*"

1st. This is spoken to the glory and praise of God, that He takes under His own protection those who fear Him when they are surrounded by the pride of man and the strife of tongues.

2nd. This is spoken for the comfort and direction of His people when they are in such circumstances. Let them remember that there is a hiding-place for them. Let them not retaliate and meet the proud with pride, and the strife of tongues with striving with the tongue, but let them cast their burden on the Lord, and betake themselves to their hiding-place, even "*the secret of His presence.*"

How blind and how foolish the man who, instead of betaking himself to the Refuge, plunges into strife and contention.

The One who hides them is the Lord, and the place of hiding is the secret of His presence—the secret place where He is manifest, where He is Himself dwelling. He hides them with Himself by bringing them near Himself, before His very eye, guarded by His own

peculiar care, lest the pride of man and the strife of tongues should prevail to their hurt. When there is danger abroad, a father will not trust his loved children out of his sight. He must have them at home under his own eye lest any hurt them ; and it is thus that the Lord hides His people. They are safe with him. They are not in reality exposed to the onsets of their enemies. They are hid, and hid in the secret of His presence. All that the pride of man attempts to do to them is done in the secret of His presence, while His very eye is guarding them. Can you not trust that Eye with your complete keeping and perfect safety? Your adversaries are all before His face while He is hiding you in the secret of His presence.

What does this promise imply?

1st. It puts in a strong light the danger His people are in from the pride of man and the strife of tongues. The care which God takes of them by hiding them implies danger.

2nd. It implies that He will allow the pride of man to act and the strife of tongues to rage against His people. If He meant to stop at once the work of pride and strife, there would be no need of His hiding them. It is from pride awake and working, and stirring itself it may be mightily, that He hides.

3rd. Though He will allow the pride of man to work and put itself to great cost and labor in opposition and persecution, yet the promise implies complete safety in the midst of it all. He against whom the pride of man is spending itself is hidden—hidden in "the secret of His presence." Pride will be baffled and disappointed. The Lord laughs at him. The Lord is wise and skilful in all He does ; He cannot be outwitted. What God hides the most diligent search cannot find.

4th. The promise implies close fellowship with God. While the pride of man is working and the strife of tongues is raging they are hid, hid in the secret of His presence. Not in a wilderness, but in the presence of Him who was never a wilderness to His people. Hid in the most honorable place. Hid where peace is reign-

ing while the strife of tongues is raging. How often the experience of the martyrs of Jesus has illustrated these facts!

Twelve o'clock, Jan. 1st, 1876.—In writing the name of the year, the last figure must now be changed. Met just now, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of *His presence* saved them."

So ends that entry. The first text given him in the early morning of that new year set God's seal upon the meditations of the last hours of the old year, and, *satisfied*, he laid down his pen.

Later in the day he took it up again and wrote.

Saturday, Jan. 1st, 1876.—"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me."

The assurance of this will make trouble light, and will inspire us with courage to meet it. The Lord is not only with him in trouble, but reviving him in it; so that he does not faint nor sink, but renews his strength instead. The outward man perishing, the new man renewed day by day; trouble on the one hand consuming, He on the other reviving. The reviving power is greater than the consuming power. If the trouble is met by an equal power or measure of reviving, then no damage is sustained. If the reviving power is meted out in larger measure than the trouble, then there is positive gain.

It was a winter evening. The house was quiet, Mr. Ross came out of his study with his Bible open in his hand.

"What do you think is the meaning of this verse?" he said, and he read to me Rev. III. 12, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name."

"I am afraid I have never tried to find its meaning,"

I replied. "But I have been vaguely conscious in reading the verse, that the prospect of being a stationary pillar is not one naturally attractive."

"If you think of the custom of ancient conquerors, you will understand it at once," he replied, "and I have been enjoying working the thought out. When a Roman emperor achieved some great victory or won an important campaign, not only was there a triumphal procession on his return, displaying the trophies of his conquest, but, that the greatness of his exploits should be held in everlasting remembrance, on several occasions a memorial pillar was erected in the capital. This pillar was called by his own name, and on it were inscribed the story of his achievements.

"'Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.' One that 'overcometh' in the conflict of this life Christ counts so transcendent an exhibition of what the power of God can do that he is to have a permanent place in His capital as an everlasting monument of the glory of God.

"'I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, and I will write upon him my new name.' Notice, it is not the man's own name that is inscribed upon his forehead, nor is it the greatness of his own deeds that is to be kept in remembrance by his everlasting presence in heaven. It is the '*name of God*, and the *name of the city of God*, and *Christ's own new name*.' Do you see the Trinity there? and each person of the Trinity as manifested in the work of salvation?"

"Three very important inferences can be drawn from this figure.

"1st. Conquerors did not put up memorial pillars for their lesser exploits. It was only when they had done something pre-eminently glorious that they took that step. Consequently, when God speaks of placing anyone as a monumental pillar in His own capital, it is because He looks upon him as a pre-eminent exhibition of His own power and glory.

"2nd. If he that overcometh is to have a conspicuous

and permanent place in heaven as a memorial of God's marvellous power and glory, it is evident that it must have been God's power and not his own that enabled him to overcome. God is not one to take the glory when another does the work. If He takes the glory of the victory, it is simply because His power and that alone secured it.

"3rd. If we are thus to become everlasting memorials of God's power and glory, it is absolutely necessary that we forever renounce our own strength, and begin to make abundant and continuous drafts upon His power and resources. It is plain we can never become monuments of God's power but by freely and exclusively drawing upon it.

"The very thought of becoming a memorial pillar to the glory of God sets in the very strongest light the importance and necessity of utterly renouncing hope in our own strength; and it constitutes a perfect cluster of arguments for drawing freely and fully and most confidently upon the power and resources of Him who is forever to receive all the glory of our victory. 'Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever, *Amen*.'"

A few months after his death, an old letter back caught my attention among his papers. It bore a few jottings on the text: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth."

1st. Christ's chosen word in speaking of a Christian's death was referred to, "Lazarus *sleepeth*." The beautiful appropriateness of it was explained.

2nd. The pronoun "our," in the connection, was shown to be a very significant one. Lazarus was at the moment a dead man lying in his grave; but Jesus still speaks of him as "*our* friend." Now, "*our*" is plural, and is made up of *my* and *your*. In saying *our* friend, Christ really speaks of the dead man as *my* friend and *your* friend. When He says *my* friend does he not indicate that death has made no break between the dead man and Himself? The friendship between them is just as real now as when they were sitting together around

Martha's table talking of the things of the kingdom of God. In like manner, when Christ speaks of him to the disciples as *your* friend, does He not indicate that death has made no break between the dead man and them? The friendship between them is still just as real as it was when Lazarus last bade them good-bye at the door of his own house. Though the cord of earthly life had been snapped, the sweet bond of sacred human friendship had not been affected any more than the bond between Lazarus and his Lord. "*Our* friend Lazarus sleepeth."

This beautiful thought gives authority out of Christ's own mouth for believing that the sacred friendships begun on earth shall continue unbroken through the changes that physical death may make, to live and blossom as precious elements in the complex gladness of eternity. Friends in Christ here shall be friends with Christ there.

If it is remembered that the nearer we get to Christ here the deeper glows our love for those we love in the Lord, what may we anticipate as to the depth and richness of Christian fellowship when it is enjoyed in the actual presence of the Lord?

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